DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 099 FL 021 676

AUTHOR	Coleman, Mary E., Ed.; And Others
TITLE	French in Action Newsletter, 1991-1993.
PUB DATE	93
NOTE	42p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	French in Action Newsletter; n1-5 1991-93
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Techniques; College Students; Cultural Education; Curriculum Development; Deafness; *Distance Education; *Educational Television; Foreign Countries; *French; Higher Education; Instructional Improvement; *Instructional Materials; Language Teachers; Media Selection; Personal Narratives; Program Descriptions; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; *Testing; Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS	*French in Action (Video); New Zealand

ABSTRACT

The five issues of this newsletter, which focuses on a set of video-based, commercially-produced French second language instructional materials, contain articles on a variety of topics. The instructional materials in question, "French in Action," consist of a videotape component (52 episodes), an audiotape component, workbook, study guide, and textbook. Among the topics discussed are: curriculum development using the materials; personal narratives of classroom applications; ideas for general application in teacher education and testing; hints concerning the use of specific episodes; making the transition from a different set of instructional materials; a modification of the course used with deaf college students; use in distance education; selection of the curriculum for New Zealand's educational television network; professional news and announcements; and letters. (MSE)

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ED 364 099

French in Action
Newsletter

Vol. I, No. 1
Vol. I, No. 2
No. III
No. IV
Number 5

Creating a Network of French Action Users

April 1991

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French in Action

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 1 | Creating a Network of French In Action Users | April 1991

French in Action pioneer Barbara Meister wins prestigious Klingenstein Fellowship

Will spend next year developing pre-college materials for French in Action

Several weeks ago, Barbara Meister received a letter from the Teachers College at Columbia University. It announced her acceptance into the prestigious Joseph Klingenstein Fellows Program. According to the letter, Meister had been selected from "a group of outstanding and talented educators ... throughout the nation." Apart from her great talent as a teacher and impressive credentials, the most unique and distinctive aspect of her application may have been the nature of her proposal. As stated in her Program Plan, "The purpose of my proposal is to create a manual of guidelines for pre-university instructional strategies to accompany *French in Action*."

Given her young age, 27, and her limited experience compared to the other applicants, it seemed as though Meister would have little chance of being accepted. "It is very, very competitive," she explained. "Last year no language people won, and this year I am the only language person. The other applicants are mostly older people, who are already possibly heads of schools or heads of departments, so winning was really an uphill battle for me. But that says a lot for *FiA*. I convinced them that my proposal was valid and its objective important enough [to merit a fellowship]."

Meister has been using *FiA* as a core program to teach French to fifth and sixth graders at Collegiate, a private school for boys in New York City, where she has been a teacher for the past six years. She has wanted to "do something with the program for a couple of years now." She considers *FiA* to be a resounding success, even with such young children. "Because of this program, the children feel so free to express themselves. And they sound so French. [*FiA*] creates the desire to say as much as you can and to sound as French as you can, to really try to sound authentic. They love to imitate every bit of it. And with the video, they can imitate it physically, with their hands and eyes. Everything they see on the tape they love to do. The program really motivates them."

***"Winning was really an uphill battle for me. But that says a lot for* French in Action."**

While teaching with *FiA* over the years, Meister has taken an interest in developing supplemental materials which would make *FiA* more accessible to children of all ages, from elementary to high school. In terms of elementary school kids, Meister finds that, "once you get to about Lesson 10 the grammar becomes too sophisticated. We need to get a handle on how to present the grammar in a way that is better suited to their level. The story itself is not a problem. It's all tongue in cheek. It's funny. They are supposed to laugh, and they do!"

Meister plans to create supplementary materials for middle and upper school students as well. Because *FiA* was conceived and developed with college students in mind, supplementary materials for pre-college students are not yet available. During next year at Columbia, Meister hopes to, "visit and observe and talk to teachers, find out what they are doing, what is working, what is not working, and get ideas about what they think they need; and then come up with materials which will make the program work better, different ways of showing the video, and working with the audio, and what kinds of group activities work, etc. Now that I have this year off I can really come up with things that will help everybody."

As part of her research next year, Meister is going to interview at both private and public schools. She doesn't believe that *FiA* is only appropriate for private school students. "Certain things about children are universal. Certainly my kids are very motivated, but on the other hand, I think you can motivate anybody if you present the language in the right way and if you make it fun. That is the thing about *FiA*: It's fun! If Capretz's hair looks funny, any kid who looks at the screen is going to laugh and enjoy it. When Marie-Laure is talking about loving chocolate, it's not just private school kids who are going to want to say what she is saying. I think you can make it work for anybody. It is just a matter of knowing your audience."

According to Meister, some of the things which give *FiA* its universal appeal and make it almost more appropriate for children than adults include the fact that it doesn't scare them. "My kids are not scared of anything. They are not scared of complicated structures because they don't realize they are complicated. They just do whatever is asked of them. They don't know about the grammar that is behind it, so they don't worry about it. They just pick it up. The way the exercises are presented, they can imitate the model, and just through repetition pick grammar up. People

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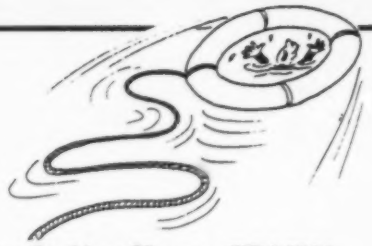
FiA
BULLETIN BOARD

If you need help or information, or can provide help or information to your colleagues, this bulletin board is for you. Please address written notices to the French in Action Newsletter at 111 Grove St, New Haven, CT 06511.



FiA in the summer: Elizabeth Anglin and her summer teachers institute in Mississippi

Professor Elizabeth Anglin, a professor at the University of Southern Mississippi, has conducted two three-week French workshops at USM for Mississippi high school teachers, one during the summer of '88 and one during the summer of '90. In a report on the workshops, she credited their success to two factors. One was the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers who participated. The other was the *French in Action* materials they used. Anglin would like to run an institute this summer, but can't because of a lack of funding.

Lucia Hodgson: What inspired you to run a summer teacher's institute in Mississippi?

Elizabeth Anglin: In Mississippi, as in many other parts of the country, teachers in the small towns get very few opportunities to practice their French. And sometimes teachers are not well-prepared to teach French because they are certified in another area. [Running a summer institute] just seemed like a way to allow teachers who are in very isolated situations to improve their French and to update their teaching approach and techniques.

LH: Why did you choose French in Action as the core materials for the institute?

EA: First of all, I'm not native French. [*FiA*] allowed me to run a workshop *and* let the high school teachers hear a whole lot of native French from different people, as opposed to hearing only my French. It was also partly a question of money. *FiA* enables you to do an institute with a very limited budget. When you run a workshop you generally need a number of people to do it. Because *FiA* has so many materials , [the teachers attending the workshop] don't have to count on a workshop teacher all the time. They can get modeling and feedback from the materials. That first summer I ran it all by myself, and I couldn't possibly have done that if I couldn't have put them to work in small groups.

> **"French in Action** *enables you to do an institute with a very limited budget."*

> **"French in Action** *allowed me to run a workshop and let the high school teachers hear a whole lot of native French from different people."*

[Another thing which] intrigued me about *FiA* was the possibility of a dozen teachers at very different levels participating in the same class. When you run an institute here in Mississippi in the summer there is really a rather small audience to draw on. You can't constitute a workshop of people at the same level. The advantage of *FiA* is that it provides interesting and challenging materials for teachers at very different levels. The people whose French was much better never got bored with it, and they learned to use it in their classrooms, and the people who were very unsure about their French were able to learn more of the language. The teachers were accomplishing different goals with the same materials.

LH: What was the focus of your institute?

EA: We were essentially trying to get the teachers to use French in the classroom, and we used *FiA* as an example to illustrate techniques for using the language in the classroom [by manipulating video materials]. What we were trying to show them was that they didn't necessarily have to be proficient themselves [in French] to use these materials.

LH: Did the teachers accept this idea?

EA: Yes. They had all been intimidated by the idea of trying to speak French in the classroom, but by the end they were all amazed at how well it worked and how much more interesting it was. We had a follow-up meeting in the fall. One of them, who had started at a very low level of proficiency, was just absolutely wide-eyed at how much she had learned. She had gone home and kept working with *FiA*. That was what we were looking for; we were trying to let them understand that *FiA* teaches them how to learn.

For these teachers it was a real eye-opener. They had always thought of French as some kind of strange code that they didn't know very much of and that their students knew less of. They didn't think of it as something real. I think that's what they got out of *FiA:* They understood that French is a real language and that they can actually speak it and that they can actually teach their students to speak it. You can try to explain that to people, but I think that as a result of the institute, a number of them had the experience of understanding themselves that it is really true. *-L.H.*

Would you like more information about getting your hands on French in Action exam copies and materials?

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Or contact:
Yale University Press
92A Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520

French In Action
NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 1
April 1991

Editor : Lucia Hodgson
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The **French in Action Newsletter** is published whenever the spirit moves us, but not more than three times a year, usually in spring, autumn and winter. Subscriptions are free of charge, and can be obtained by completing the form on page 7 and sending it to the following address:

French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

The **French in Action Newsletter** is published by the French in Action Project with support from the Annenberg/CPB Project and the Yale University Press.

How *French in Action* changed my teaching career

Mary-Madeleine Watkins, a professor at Berea College in Kentucky, talks about how she finally found the program of her dreams.

☛*Lucia Hodgson: Tell me about your history as a teacher.*

***Marie-Madeleine Watkins*: Born in Paris, I attended the Lycée Lamartine, and then the Sorbonne where I earned a License de Lettres Modernes. I won a scholarship to study at Sweet Briar College, and then I earned my Masters and much later finished my PhD at the University of Texas in Austin. In '78, just before I finished my dissertation, I got my first and only job here at Berea College. Now I am an Associate Professor of French.**

LH: When did you start using *FiA*?

MW: We are in our third year. We started the semester after Dr. Capretz made his presentation at a workshop at Wooster College. I had heard about *FiA* from a friend at the U of Texas. It seemed so fantastic that it was probably too good to be true, or something that was only for big league schools. I forgot about it, but every so often when I had an especially unpleasant classroom experience struggling with the various other books we used (we would change textbooks every so often looking for the perfect one) I would dream about how nice it would be to have something as fantastic and luxurious as *FiA*, what I knew about it anyway.

Then I attended the workshop. M. Capretz's presentation couldn't have been clearer. There was no hype. It was very convincing. On the way back, my colleague and I decided that *FiA* sounded so good that we shouldn't wait to make a change. If we really believed in it, we should change right away, and right away meant for the Spring semester.

The question was: Who is going to get started with this new method? They decided that I should, and that was the most exciting thing that had happened to me in all my years of teaching. I really felt the kind of enthusiasm that teaching ought to bring. I was also a little bit nervous, because the whole thing is a little bit intimidating. It has so many components, and I wasn't sure I would know how to use them. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to control the material. But there was really no reason for me to feel that way, because after I had studied everything thoroughly, really gotten into it, and rehearsed and read and underlined and practiced, the more I looked at it the better it looked, and the easier it looked to use.

That spring semester, three years ago, I taught the first 101 class, and then in the fall we added two more sections, and the more we use it the happier we are. Now looking back on it, I realize that that first time around I was probably not doing the materials justice. I was not really using them very proficiently, as I should have, but that is perfectly normal, I am sure. It takes practice. Since then I have attended a couple more workshops, done on the local level.

LH: How are students doing with *FiA* compared to how they were doing before with other methods.

MW: Yesterday I returned some writing assignments from my third level French class, and the level of proficiency they have achieved in writing is astonishing, astounding. Most of the papers were two pages long, and the assignment was on the lesson where Robert and Mireille go to Chartres. Robert is jealous because he thinks he sees Mireille talking to the *beau Suédois* in the *petite Alpine rouge*. Of course the question is: Did he see her or not? Does she know the *beau Suédois* or not? I asked them to write a letter from Mireille to Ghislaine, recounting the outing in Chartres. I got such beautiful papers, and this is not the first time. I have had many, many great, great papers, written in incredibly good French, something that I would never had dared ask of my students before. Before, with the old methods, we never had those writing assignments.

LH: Without mentioning any names, can you tell me the main difference between *FiA* and other programs?

MW: The greatest difference is the recycling of the material, the way material is seen once and then comes back again and is totally integrated. I never found that, and I have used just about everything out there, because I was never satisfied. Another is the perfect integration of culture and language, which is something that you simply do not find in the regular texts. With the other texts you have those silly little dialogs, and they are supposed to present the typical French family having lunch together, or a typical student saying, "Bonjour, je m'appelle so and so. Je ne suis pas français, je suis sénégalais. J'aime étudier, mais je n'étudie pas tout le temps." That was supposed to give us a picture of a typical French speaking student, and it was bland, tasteless. It didn't evoke any image of what a French person is all about. It was totally neutral, totally culturally fabricated, totally artificial. Nobody really speaks like that or would say that spontaneously. There was none of the idiomatic French that is captured in *FiA*.

LH: Could you compare *FiA*'s approach to grammar to that of other text-books?

MW: I think the way *FiA* presents grammar in context is the only way to do it. Otherwise you have dry, boring, grammar lessons, instead of having language lessons. The students absorb the grammar. The workbook is beautifully made; everything in the workbook is meaningful. So many of those other workbooks just look like busy work. [In *FiA*] there is this beautiful integration. Everything makes sense. It is like all the parts of the puzzle coming together. And as far as the result, I would say that the results you get with *FiA* in my experience are superior [to what you get with more traditional methods]. I think that often the students will know the grammar as well [as with traditional methods], and not just because they have memorized some rules, but because they know it has to be *qui* instead of *que*, for instance, because *que* doesn't sound right. They will say it is *qui* instead of *que* because, "Don't you remember Mireille says, *'C'est l'homme qui était dans le train,'*" or whatever. They are learning grammar the way language is learned, not the way grammar is memorized. That I think is definitely a plus.

LH: What do you think of the *FiA* videos?

MW: It goes without saying that it is more enjoyable to watch, especially something that is as well done. Nothing is stilted, nothing is contrived. There is always a lot of humor in the situation, and truth. The truth that is presented is never stereotypical. We are not given a caricature of French people. I tell you, Madame Courtois, les Courtois ... I swear I know these people. They were the parents of my best friend, and there are people really like that. This is very important in terms of teaching. It prepares our students. Those of our students who have spent a semester abroad with a background in *FiA* all say, "Oh , but I knew this, I expected this because I saw it in *FiA*." And it goes from being able to identify *une boîte aux lettres*, to knowing about food, to not taking a whole cheese on your plate. Little things that you would not think about, but which to them make a big difference. [With other textbooks] there is no way [that could happen]. It is just not the same animal.

LH: How do you implement *FiA* in your classes?

MW: In 101 we do up to and including lesson 13, and after that I decided not to do more than 12 lessons a semester. 13 would be ideal, 13 would cover everything, but it just is pushing them too hard. We end at lesson 35 or 36. Starting next spring we are going to add a 104 which will take it from wherever we stop and add 13 or maybe 14 lessons. When they finish 104 they will go into a survey of French Literature or Advanced Grammar and Composition or a seminar on French Lit which I teach.

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French in Action and the Advanced Placement Exams

Carolyn Demaray talks about the solid foundation FiA *provides*

Carolyn Demaray will be speaking at the upcoming Northeast Conference '91 on the theme of building bridges to the AP. A teacher of French at The Hotchkiss School since '72, Demaray has been involved with *FiA* since before its publication. Her school taught with the prototype of the method, known as *La Méthode*, for over ten years before the published *FiA* became available. Since '73 she has been actively involved with the Advanced Placement Program, both in language and literature, and has worked for The College Board of New York, and The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. She graded AP exams for fourteen years, first as a Reader, then as a Table Leader and Question Leader. She was also a member of the Development Committee for both the AP Language and Literature examinations for three years. Demaray stands behind *FiA* as "a perfect blend of oral and written French, putting the beginning French student far ahead of any other program," she is aware of.

Lucia Hodgson:: What is the connection between a beginning French program and the AP exam?

Carolyn Demaray: Teachers are very worried that their foundation courses will not be solid enough to prepare the students for the AP. As you can well imagine, success at the advanced placement level is only as good as its foundation. AP courses in French are not something that can be done in just one year of teaching.

LH: Why do you recommend *FiA*?

CD: We find that *FiA* gives us this good solid foundation. It provides a wonderful basis and foundation for AP pursuits later on. I have seen no other course in the twenty-four years that I have been teaching that offers as strong a foundation, as pleasantly.

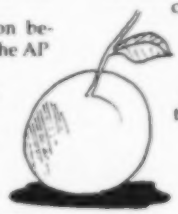
LH: How do you implement the program in your school?

CD: We divide it, using the first half in French 1, and the second half in French 2. We use the entire program up to about lesson 47, and then we do the last lessons very quickly, giving the students the story line and picking out selected bits from the grammar to go over, mainly because of time constraints. [In terms of how it is used], we follow the proposed program just about to a T. We do just what is suggested.

I try to personalize it as much as I can, and to expand on it. I find that high school students are really interested in talking about themselves. So if we are studying Robert and Mireille going to see a movie, for instance, I will ask the students if they have been to the movies recently, what they have seen, who paid, or I will focus on what they have done lately, what they have ordered in a restaurant. When we get to the lottery, most of them are not old enough to be able to purchase a lottery ticket, but they are interested in talking about it. It seems to me that *FiA* is full of things that appeal to the students, and they are encouraged therefore to respond, to speak, to communicate. It gives them a wonderful feeling when they discover that they can do this.

LH: Traditional teachers tend to think that *FiA* over emphasizes oral work and underemphasizes the learning of grammar. Can you comment on this?

CD: It doesn't require any drilling of grammar, as such. Teachers are a little frightened that the students might not learn it. In fact, the students absorb it. It is the way a little child learns the language. I think that ultimately the contextual approach is not only easier and more natural, but it sticks with them longer. Grammar rules will be forgotten. What good is a rule if they can't apply and use it? I think it is far better to be able to use the language and use it correctly even without knowing the grammar rule. [*FiA* students] can use hypothetical/conditional sentences; they use the subjunctive automatically, as they have heard it. They are able to repeat it. I think that is far better than learning a grammar rule and not being able to apply it. And to do it all in French is far better than going back and forth between French and English.



[With *FiA*] they are able to pick up the grammar and use it quite naturally, which I find is a plus to the program, and a plus eventually on the AP exam. For instance, in the essay on the AP language examination, the graders look for use of idiomatic expressions, and they don't want them just thrown in and not properly used. A student who is trained in *FiA* will use them properly and naturally.

I don't think it is lacking in anything. It covers more verb tenses in the first year than other programs. It is authentic. The students can communicate. Even the poorer students communicate with the good feeling that they are speaking in French and making themselves understood. There is a lot of headroom for the brighter students to take off, to invent with the language, to be creative and imaginative with it.

I also find that it encourages more students to continue in French and not to be frightened to attempt advanced language study. Some students may be intimidated, or not like what they perceive as the "drudgery" of grammar learning. Learning grammar is no fun. *FiA* is fun, and they absorb the grammar through using the language.

> ***"I have seen no other course in the twenty-four years that I have been teaching that offers as strong a foundation, as pleasantly."***

LH: How do you feel about the way *FiA* presents the student with French culture with both a big C and a little c?

CD: It seems to me that France is a nice combination of both. There certainly are the literary families, but there are a lot of other French men and women who are going about their daily chores, living their life, taking the train, renting cars, and even winning the lottery occasionally. This is what makes it exciting and appealing to the high school student. It reaches them where they are, and may inspire them to pursue the study of some other things French. Certainly from the literary selections that are in the program they may be inspired to read some Ionesco or go on to read some poetry or what have you.

LH: What do students in your school go on to do after two years of *FiA*?

Continued on page 7

FiA CALENDAR

French in Action will be present at all of the following events:

March 21-24
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language
Indianapolis, IN

April 8
Barrington High School Workshop
Barrington, RI

April 25-27
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language
New York, NY
Thursday 4/25 at 9:00am - Pre-Conference Workshop
Friday 4/26 at 3:30pm - The Teacher as Video Mediator
Saturday 4/27 at 7:30am - FiA Breakfast
Saturday 4/27 at 10:30am - Building Bridges to the AP Level

April 26-28
Southwest Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language
Anaheim, CA
Yale University Press Exhibit Booth

May 9-11
Pacific Northwest Council on Foreign Language
Spokane, WA
Yale University Press Exhibit Booth

May 17-18
Mountain Brook High School Workshop
Mountain Brook, AL
FiA One and a Half Day Workshop conducted by Pierre Capretz

July 3-5
American Association of Teachers of French
Minneapolis, MN

November 23-25
American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Washington, DC

FiA *in the United States*

French in Action is spreading rapidly throughout the United States. At this time over 100,000 students have studied with *FiA* textbooks and workbooks in the United States alone. The program has been used in some 1500 institutions in this country. Approximately half are pre-college level. *FiA* is used in all states and possessions from Alaska to Florida and from Hawaii to the Virgin Islands.

Some 40 colleges teach French to distant learners, off-campus, with *FiA* telecourses.

Four states - New York, Massachusetts, Texas and Utah - have acquired licenses enabling them to put the video materials in every high school in the state.

More than 300 businesses and major corporations are using *FiA*, among them Encyclopedia Britannica, Otis Elevator Co., M & M Mars Inc., Pepsi Cola International, Honeywell, IBM, Michelin Tire Corporation and Euro-Disneyland.

FiA *on the air*

Based on Nielsen data, more than 8 million people have watched *French in Action* on television since it premiered.

According to PBS, 100 of the 331 public television stations in the United States are airing *FiA* during the Spring of 1991. Those stations serve some 51% of the total number of United States television households. Major cities where *FiA* regularly airs include New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

[If you do not get *FiA* on your local PBS station, write and phone to the program manager, have your friends, students, and students' parents call until you get it. It is free for the station, and will be free for you if you persevere.]

FiA can be seen on the Learning Channel (cable) three times per week, reaching 24% of all US television households. It is also carried by Jones Intercable.

FiA *abroad*

French in Action is on television in Brazil (TV Cultura), Seoul, South Korea, and on cable in Tokyo and Japan. It is used in France, in Taiwan, at the University of Beijing, Republic of China, in England, in Italy, and in many other places we have not yet discovered.

FiA *invades Canada*

In British Columbia, the Open Learning Agency has just created a telecourse centered on *French in Action* with additional Canadian video footage from Radio Quebec and other sources. Use of this telecourse for off-campus students disseminated throughout the vastitudes of Canadian territories began in November, 1990.

FiA *in the Summer*

French in Action will be taught this summer at Middlebury in the beginner course, and in the "faux débutants" course by Catherine LeGouis. It will also be taught at MIIS (Monterey Institute for International Studies) under the direction of Gisèle Kapuscinsky. For teachers, it will be taught at the Colorado State University Summer Institute for Foreign Language Teachers under the direction of Elizabeth Berwanger. All three aforementioned professors are pioneers of the referential approach embodied in *FiA*, and outstanding practitioners of the "Capretz Method."

The Bible, Shakespeare and, of course, FiA

When asked by US Magazine (July 11, 1988) what five survival essentials he would like to have if shipwrecked, film critic Roger Ebert chose *French in Action* along with the *King James Bible*, the complete works of Shakespeare, *Gates of Heaven*, and *Djangology*, a Django Reinhardt disc anthology.

FiA NEWS

Contribute to the FiA *Newsletter*

Do you belong in the French in Action Newsletter? We welcome written contributions, suggestions, comments and questions for any and all of our sections, or sections we haven't even thought of yet. We reserve the right to edit and publish all submissions without prior notice to their authors, unless requested not to do so.
Please address contributions to:

The French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

FiA *appears on* Jeopardy

According to the *Village Voice* (January 23, 1990), *French in Action*'s "social status soared last December, when trivia king Alex Trebeck of *Jeopardy* ushered the series into the world of bona fide pop culture with this $200 question in the category of 'PBS'."
Question: "Portraying Mireille and Robert, [actors] Valérie Allain and Charles Mayer show us this language 'in action.'"
Answer: "What is French?"

Talking about FiA

There has been a lot of talk about *French in Action*, close to 150 talks and workshops since the fall of 1987. One session of a seminar at Université de Paris X (Nanterre) on the *French Presence in American Medias* was devoted to *FiA* (January 13, 1990). Another session on *FiA* was held at the Stage Pour Professeurs de Français à l'Etranger of CLAB (Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Besançon) on August 20, 1990. At the annual meeting of ACTFL in Nashville, November, 1990, Carol Herron of Emory University reported on a study she conducted comparing results obtained by an experimental group of students working with *FiA* and a control group using a conventional text. Next door at the same time Jeanne Manning of Northern Virginia Community College explained how she teaches *FiA* in two different places at the same time through two-way video.

FiA *at the Northeast Conference*

Carolyn Demaray of The Hotchkiss School will discuss forming a solid foundation with *French in Action* for the Advanced Placement Examinations in her talk entitled "Building Bridges To the AP Level." Carol Herron of Emory University will talk about the results of her study comparing results obtained by using *FiA* with a more conventional approach at the *FiA* breakfast. Peggy Beauvois of the University of Texas will conduct a pre-conference workshop on the use of video, particularly the use of the *FiA* series, on Thursday, April 25. Pierre Capretz will discuss The Teacher as Video Mediator for *FiA* on Friday, April 26. See *FiA* Calendar for exact times and locations.

FiA *on its way to Hollywood*

French in Action has been recognized by the following awards:
International Film and TV Festival of New York (1988)
Association for Educational Communications and Technology (1988 and 1989)
Ohio State Awards (1989)
Birmingham International Educational Film Festival (1988)
National Educational Film and Video Festival (1988)

FiA *infiltrates Alabama*

In an effort to garner votes for *French in Action* at the upcoming State Adoption meeting , Karen Mitchell of Huntsville High School in Huntsville, AL will be piloting the program with her French 2 class next year. The class of 10th and 11th graders will attempt to cover a sizable portion of Part I of *FiA*, implemented as it was intended for maximum success. Bonne chance!

Watkins

Continued from page 3

LH: How does *FiA* work for non-majors?

MW: All they have to do is take those three semesters and I think they enjoy it. One student who is a Spanish major told me that she really knows far more French at the 103 level than she did Spanish at the 103 level, because of the difference between a traditional way of teaching a language, as used by the Spanish teacher for lack of anything better, and FiA. The average French students end up being better prepared. They understand a lot more, which is so important. Training their ear - we never had that with the other methods. The students are also much more aware of cultural differences. They have absorbed culture as they went along, sometimes very consciously: I will emphasize, for example, something important about the cathedral of Chartres. Or sometimes subliminally: they are absorbing culture without being aware that they are absorbing culture, things that have to do with gestures, body language, or just getting a feeling for what it is like to be in a French street.

With the old methods there we were doing our drills and reading our silly dialogs, and then we would have to stop and say, "Okay now we have ten minutes left, let's talk about Napoleon," or Versailles, or whatever cultural point happened to be at the end of the chapter. For the most part high culture, or sometimes it was something like the educational system, the importance of the *bac*. I would try to speak in French as much as I could because even back then I knew that speaking French is not something that you do when you have done everything else, but that should be done every step of the way. But I had to lapse into English just about all the time, say it in French, translate it into English, mix the two. Now I speak French 99.999 percent of the time. There is no reason for me to say anything in English, except when I want to be very clear about an assignment or a date.

"With other programs, I brought in materials, and tacked them on with scotch tape, bubble gum, and spit. It was an effort to bring something to a class that was so poor in realistic material."

The rest of the time there is no reason for me to use any English, and the students expect it. Once those first two days of orientation are over, well that's it, that's the rule of the game, and there is no questioning it. And they are proud of their achievements. Sometimes at the end of the lesson I ask: Aren't you amazed that we talked about cars vs. SNCF. Did you know you could say all this? And sometimes they say: I never would have thought that I would find myself speaking French for ten minutes on such a topic. It really feels good, it makes me feel good, it makes them feel good, and for me it has really made teaching those elementary courses which are bread and butter, a joyful experience. Before it was mostly frustration. I always thought there had to be a better way, and *FiA* is the better way. It is what I have really been hoping for, never knowing exactly what shape, what form it would take. It was really what I was hoping teaching a language and learning a language could be all about.

FiA: Is it more work than other methods?

MW: No. And what work it is makes sense and pays off. I don't bring in any other materials. I have got everything and more with FiA. It is so rich. There are so many things you can emphasize, all in French, talking about the characters, the situations, the background. It's inexhaustible.

With other programs, I brought in materials, and they were tacked on with scotch tape, bubble gum, and spit. It was an effort to bring some realistic material to a class that was so poor in realistic material, but what I brought to class didn't always fit. I would bring in a song or a poem or an article, and there would be all kinds of things that hadn't been introduced so I found myself using translation.

"There is that human warmth, that bonding that exists between the students and the teachers and the video characters. . . They are so believable. And M. Capretz, he is my team teacher. I teach in team with him."

I really can't understand teachers who use FiA as a supplement, who just show the video. That is entirely missing the point, like having a supercomputer and using it to type envelopes. It is just doesn't make sense. I think there need to be more workshops and people getting together on the local level to show that there is a correct way of using the material. Otherwise people sometimes miss the point and that is a shame.

FiA: Are there other misconceptions out there?

MW: I have heard people say that they can't adopt the program because their TA's wouldn't know how to use it. Sometimes [the TA's] are not very proficient. But the worse of a speaker you are, the better FiA is for you, because it does part of the teaching for you. You no longer have to show how bad or rusty your French is. You can just use the video; it protects you. If you are in the classroom [without a video] and your French isn't very good, everybody knows it, unless of course you do nothing but use English and translate, which is what lots of people do. Another thing is that the method is so well structured, so well put together, that once you step in, you can just move along with it. Teachers can learn from the program and we can only hope that they will.

People make fun of me. They say, "You think FiA works miracles." But I really do. It has changed our professional lives like nothing else could have done. It has really transformed those elementary courses. The video is so wonderful. There is that human warmth, that bonding that exists between the students and the teachers and the video characters. That means M. Capretz, that means Michael the obnoxious student, and Tante Georgette, and Marie-Laure, and Jean-Pierre Bourdon and the whole wonderful cast of characters. They are so believable. And M. Capretz, he is my team teacher. I teach in team with him. - *LH*

Sample Lesson Plan

Watkins' Built-In Review System For FiA

Basic set-up: Over the course of the week that a particular lesson is being studied, the students are given periodic testing on the previous lesson. They are also, at the start of the new lesson, given a short, to-the-point quiz on a lesson from the previous semester.

Methodology: By testing them often and in small doses, "cramming" is avoided. By not testing on a lesson until the students have gotten started on the next one, the students get a chance to assimiliate the material before being tested on it. Testing students on material from the previous semester keeps them from concentrating only on the lesson they are working on, and allows them to see how much progress they have made.

Example (Lesson 20):

Thursday:
- 10 minute review quiz on Lesson 13 from the previous semester.
- Start Lesson 20 in the lab. Students watch the video once through with headphones. Then they rewatch the story line, then the pedagogical section, and then the story line again.

Friday:
- Work-up of 60% of video story line of Lesson 20.
- Short quiz on Lesson 19.

Monday:
- Students are responsible for first half of workbook of Lesson 20.
- Work-up of the rest of the video story line.
- Work-up of approximately 30% of video pedagogical section.

Tuesday:
- Work-up of the rest of the video pedagogical section.
- 15 minute test on Lesson 19.

Wednesday:
- Students are responsible for second half of workbook of Lesson 20.
- Review of Summary Quiz of Lesson 20.
- Reinvention of the story. Talking about story line, illustrations in textbook, small group work.
- 10 minute discussion of Lesson 14.

Thursday:
- 10 minute review quiz on Lesson 14 from the previous semester.
- Start Lesson 21 in the lab.

Demaray

Continued from page 4

CD: We send them right from *FiA* into good substantial grammar books, and they read some literary works. We have read *L'Etranger*, Thérèse Desqueyroux, some La Fontaine, L'Ecole des Femmes. [Some of our students also] are fortunate enough to spend the summer in France. They come back absolutely astounded that they were able to understand, be understood, get along in what they call "real" France. This in turn inspires them to go on. [Many] of them will come back and [tell me] they want to continue their studies in French. I think this is a great compliment to the program.

I am so fond of French and want my students so badly to perform well in French and to enjoy it, that I really dislike methods that reduce this wonderful learning to schoolwork, something not interesting. *FiA* is lively, it's culturally authentic, its appealing to the students. It is excellent for the gifted students and it is wonderful for the less talented language students as well. The stronger student can pick up a little more in vocabulary, intonation, innuendo, gestures, what have you, but the weaker student certainly does not have a feeling of being left behind. He too can communicate.

LH: So you don't feel that *FiA* is more appropriate for private schools than for public schools?

CD: No. I think it is a marvelous program for students of all and many varying language abilities, the talented and the less talented. But I think that some schools may not be using the program as it is intended, and this is going to cause aberrations in what the students learn. Often it is used partially, or teachers will show the story line and try to combine it with something else, which is absolutely not necessary. It is a well-conceived, beautifully constructed program which when used in its entirety produces the desired results. To break it up and use segments here and there, or use supplementary materials, is not necessary.

LH: Some teachers feel that a program which has a major video component encourages too much passive learning. Do you agree?

CD: I don't think that that is the fault of the program. If *FiA* is viewed as passive, it is the fault of the way it is being implemented. It is up to the teacher to stop and use the video and call on the students to get them involved and to encourage them to act it out or to link it to their own experience. Or when Robert and Mireille are walking down the Champs-Elysées holding hands, for instance, the teacher can gently tease the students: "I saw you holding hands with so and so." This is a great pleasure of the program, and the students respond positively and actively to this. They learn without realizing that they are learning. They are just absorbing it. I don't think that the program was ever intended just to be put on a TV monitor and for the teacher to go and snooze in the corner. I think it is intended to be worked with actively in the classroom, and for us it is a lively and successful program indeed. - *L.H.*

Cancans

Les cancans de la concierge du 18 (rue de Vaugirard)

Julie Arnold, qui joue Cécile, la sœur aînée de Mireille, a été vue, le mois dernier, lors de la remise des Césars (équivalents français des Oscars américains) à la tribune des invités d'honneur, à deux places de Sophia Loren. Mais oui, ma chère!

Valérie Allain (Mireille dans le *Français en Action*) a reparu sur Antenne 2 avec la reprise d'*Un Château au Soleil*, série dans laquelle elle joue le rôle d'une petite fleuriste qui finit par épouser le fils du château, ce qui la console de n'avoir même pas eu l'occasion d'embrasser Robert.

Meister

Continued from page 1

definitely learn more in this kind of environment. At this age they don't forget. They really do absorb the language. And they are not just parroting it. I can pull out questions from any lesson that they have done, and mix them all up, and they recognize them and come back with an answer. They come up with the most clever things. I am always astounded."

Another element of *FiA* which works well with younger children and the young at heart is its incorporation of role-playing. "They love playing the parts," Meister says of her students. "They want to read the dialogs in the workbook [at the end of the *Préparation à la communication*] at least twenty different times so that they each have a chance to do it. It is like a contest: Who can sound more like Mireille or Fido. And they love the reinvention of the story. I have them write out their own sometimes at home, and they will do it over and over in class."

Teachers are sometimes hesitant to start their young students out with *FiA* before they have studied with a more traditional textbook. Meister adamantly opposes that position. "If you have a chance to start kids early with language, then I would start them with *FiA* immediately, so that by the time they are at that awkward age in seventh grade they are used to it already. Then hopefully they won't change their attitude. It is precisely because it is different from traditional methods that it is so great. I mean, how often do you hear: I took a foreign language for six years and I can't say a word of it. If you start them with *FiA*, then maybe we have a chance." -*L.H.*

Become a *FiA* pioneer. Join the network of *FiA* users. Keep in touch with *FiA* and your colleagues. Simply fill out this card, put it in an envelope, and address it to *French in Action Newsletter*, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Do you use *FiA* as your core materials? _____
As a supplement? _____ As a telecourse? _____
In college or university? _____

At what level(s)? _____
In pre-college courses? _____

In what grade(s)? ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

At what level(s)? ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Other? _____

Name _____

Institution_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

Do we have permission to make your coordinates available to colleagues? Yes_____ No _____
Does that include your phone/fax numbers? _____

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Signed **Date**

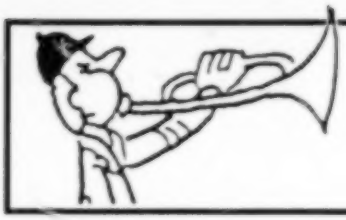


Tableau d'Honneur

Réinvention de l'histoire

This "réinvention de l'histoire" was created through the collective efforts of a first year college class at Yale. The class had just finished Lesson 21.

Hemingway est assis sur un banc au jardin du Luxembourg. Michel-Ange s'approche.

Michel-Ange: Pardon, Monsieur, est-ce que vous voudriez bien me permettre de faire votre portrait?

Hemingway: Mon portrait? Pourquoi?

Michel-Ange: Eh bien, je trouve que vous avez la tête de Moïse, et je dois faire le portrait de Moïse. Vous permettez?

Hemingway: Oui, si vous voulez ... Alors, comme ça, vous faites de la peinture?

Michel-Ange: Oui, enfin ... je barbouille.

Hemingway: Mais ne vous excusez pas; il n'y a pas de sot métier ... Vous avez un petit accent. Vous n'êtes pas français?

Michel-Ange: Non, je suis italien; je viens de Rome. Vous connaissez sûrement, tous les chemins y mènent.

Hemingway: Non, pas encore, mais je compte y aller dans quelques jours. Je viens des États-Unis ...

Michel-Ange: Ah, vous êtes américain?

Hemingway: ... Oui, et j'invente des histoires, c'est mon métier. On dit que l'histoire de Rome est très importante, alors je dois absolument y aller.

Michel-Ange: Voilà, j'ai fini.

Hemingway: Est-ce que je peux vous inviter à prendre quelque chose à la Closerie des Lilas? C'est tout près.

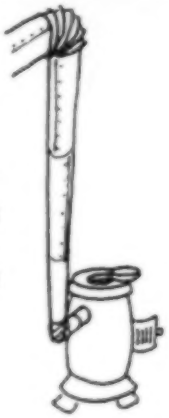
Michel-Ange: Ah, je regrette, je ne peux pas accepter.

Hemingway: C'est dommage. Moi, je vais tous les jours déjeuner à la Closerie: leur whisky est excellent. Eh bien, au revoir.

Michel-Ange: Au revoir, Monsieur, et merci.

Tuyaux

Mystère et boule de gomme



A good way to stimulate the students' interest and to get them to talk is to have them try to elucidate one of the many mysteries hidden in the FiA story. For example, in the video for Lesson 22, you can ask them: Is the shifty-eyed garçon at the Closerie des Lilas cheating Robert when he quotes him the price for the kir? He tells him that "le service est compris," and that it is, "quinze pourcent." But is it really? Could he be overcharging him? Is that why his eyes are so shifty? Is that why Robert doesn't look happy?
This "tuyau" was contributed by Marie-Madeleine Watkins of Berea College in Kentucky

Sur le carnet de Tante Georgette

En avril ne quitte pas un fil.
En mai fait ce qu'il te plaît.

French In Action
Newsletter

Corporation for Public Broadcasting
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French in Action

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 2 Creating a Network of **French in Action** Users Fall/Winter '91

Getting Started with French in Action

Marianne Gehr talks about how she made the switch

Marianne Gehr teaches at the Menominee Indian High School in Keshena, Wisconsin. She generously agreed to share some of her impressions of *French in Action* with our readers. Here are some of her contributions:

I heard about this wonderful French program on television. So I tuned in and discovered for myself what an absolute delight *FiA* was. I felt that I should investigate it further. I ordered all the materials. At that time, toward the end of my first year of teaching, I was using other materials I had inherited that were rather outdated. When I discovered *FiA*, I thought, "This is wonderful; this is exactly what I need." So, I began just trouble shooting with it. It was the last quarter of the school year, three years ago. I wasn't really sure how to teach it or how the kids would react to it. But, I just wanted to know more about it, thinking that rather than waiting for fall, I could just see how it would go over and what I could do with it.

I discovered, of course, that it is wonderful, that it's just so much fun. Not only did my students really have fun watching the video, they seemed to learn a great deal. I also enjoyed teaching it immensely! I've always enjoyed teaching French, but this was clearly the best learning system that I had stumbled upon.

Video

I love the video. I think that it's just so much fun. It sets *FiA* apart from all the other learning systems that I have come into contact with. I love the authenticity of the language. I love the story line: it's full of intrigue, humor, and romance. I love the scenes of Paris and of France; the true-to-life family situations. I find the instructional portion of the tape very useful. The *guignol* is an important part of the program.

The video component is so important in part because the characters seem like real-life people that the students can relate to. The family situations in the video are classic; the story is universal. All high schools have a *dragueur*. I'm really in love with the characters. They're like family. And I feel that I see new things each time. As I become more familiar with the videos, I learn which things to point out and emphasize, little things that keep up the students' interest .

Style of Teaching

Each year and during the year, I modify the way I teach with *FiA*. When I first started, I used to show the tape in its entirety. That was a huge mistake, especially for high school kids; even college kids. My daughter had a roommate who was taking a beginning level French course at a local university, and the professor showed the video in its entirety. She said, "The lights went out and the kids began snoozing." Even though she thought it was good, it didn't hold their attention. The way I show it is always changing. I am not sure how I am going to do it next year, but at this point, rather than showing the video in its entirety, I break it up, even the story line. I explain little bits and pieces. And the kids are interested. They have to have this explanation in order to really understand it. They want to get on with the story. They sit on the edge of their seats when I put it on.

"The element of surprise is so strong, and I am convinced that having to wait to find out what will happen next increases their enthusiasm for learning French."

They don't know who the *homme en noir* is, or what's going to happen with Robert and Mireille; when they are going to meet. It's like a soap opera; we just have to wait and see what happens. The element of surprise is so strong, and I am convinced that having to wait to find out what will happen next increases their enthusiasm for learning French. We have so much fun with the language.

Audio

I feel that they have to be using the language outside of the classroom, and practicing, practicing the various phrases in order to feel comfortable speaking them. I tell my

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FiA at the Junior College

Barbara Vigano of Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, California has a lot to say about *FiA*. Here are some remarks culled from a recent interview:

The evening classes at a junior college attract a varied group of students - people who are very intellectual, people who work hard during the day and are tired in the evenings; others who just want to see whether they can handle a foreign language and take a course to try their minds at college for the first time in their lives. I noticed that *FiA* satisfied the demands of a very wide range of people. With a more traditional approach, people who have a hard time intellectually drop out very quickly. These people stayed with the program and got a taste of foreign language.

Preventing Attrition

Because I had had such a fantastic experience with *FiA*, when I was capable of influencing the textbook decision at the junior college, I pushed for *FiA*. After one year, we switched. They had been using a traditional book that I used for eight years at the university. The attrition was terrible. The course was too difficult, too grammatical, too theoretical, and too intellectual for eighty percent of the student population. Now, the word is getting around to the high schools in the neighborhood that French is being taught with *FiA* and I feel that it's going to increase the enrollment. At the beginning, the program can be difficult for honest-to-goodness, real beginners. But, it keeps them in the program, as I said before. At the same time, it challenges the *faux débutants* who find so much in there that they have never learned before, even though they already had a semester or two of French when they started. The attrition level, which is very important at the state-funded junior college, decreased with *FiA*, and enrollment seemed to be increasing.

I am amazed by the number of students who have stayed with French and the evaporation of the notion that French is so difficult, so intellectual, and so elitist. Because of the cultural aspect of *FiA*, students see French as more of an introduction into a different way of life and a different culture than as a linguistic lesson. This is what keeps them in the program. I believe it is going to increase attendance and interest in French nationwide.

Pacing Lessons

Our pace is much slower than the one suggested by Capretz for the college level. We take lesson number 2 very slowly in order to retain people, and we only get as far as lesson 9 in French I. We are on the semester system, but we only meet four hours per week, and there is no mandatory language lab. Retaining the students is more important than the amount they learn. I pace the lessons with the students, and when it is going too fast, we just slow the program down.

Grammar

I used the later lessons of *FiA* to complement the class that was still using the conventional text. With that text, they were supposed to learn the subjunctive in a very theoretical way. So, I used *FiA* to illustrate the subjunctive. We saw the section about the cinema

"Because of the cultural aspect of *FiA*, students see French as more of an introduction into a different way of life and a different culture than as a linguistic lesson. This is what keeps them in the program."

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French in Action

Volume 1, Number 2
Fall/Winter 1991

Editor: Lucia Hodgson
Editor for Yale University Press:
Mary E. Coleman
Layout and Design: Debra Marr Bozzi

The *French in Action Newsletter* is published by the French in Action Project in association with Yale University Press and the Annenberg/CPB Project. Subscriptions are free, and can be obtained by completing the form on page 7 and sending it to:

French in Action Newsletter
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New Haven, CT 06511

FiA NEWS

Contribute to the FiA Newsletter

Do you belong in the *French in Action* Newsletter? We welcome written contributions, suggestions, comments, and questions for any and all of our sections. We reserve the right to edit and publish all submissions without prior notice to their authors, unless requested not to do so.

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The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has just acquired rights to broadcast *FiA* for the new Open Learning Project in Australia, a two-year project funded by the Department of Education and Training. One professor for a major university that participated in the evaluation of the program said that *FiA* was going to revolutionize language training in Australia.

In its next issue, RELIEF, a new Canadian periodical published at the University of Toronto, will feature an article by Professor Catherine LeGouis of Mt. Holyoke entitled: *"FiA* en Action—Du bon usage de la vidéo dans un enseignment intégré de la langue et de la culture."

Cleveland—On August 19, 1991, Barbara Meister of the Collegiate School, New York, N.Y., gave a presentation of *FiA* at a breakfast sponsored by the Annenberg/CPB Project at *First View '91* (a screening of educational videos organized by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for the State Departments of Education).

Toronto—On April 3, 1991, Professor Catherine LeGouis hosted a talk called *"FiA*, passé, présent, et avenir—de la théorie à la pratique" at GERSELF (Groupe de réflexion sur l'enseignement de la langue française).

The *French Review* has announced the forthcoming publication of an article by Raylene O'Connor of Simmons College entitled *"French in Action* and the Grammar Question."

Tableau d'Honneur

The following *réinvention* evolved from a *passé simple* vs. *imparfait* exercise created by Professor Martha Pereszlenyi Pinter from John Carroll University, University Heights, OH.

Imaginez que Marie-Laure fait du babysitting pour sa petite cousine, qui a 6 ans. Elle veut lui raconter une histoire, et elle choisit Cendrillon.

Il était une fois une très jolie jeune fille qui s'appelait Cendrillon. Sa mère était morte. Son père, un menuisier, se sentait très seul, et alors, il s'est remarié avec une veuve, qui avait deux filles. Malheureusement ces deux filles n'étaient pas très gentilles. Tous les matins elles faisaient faire toute la vaisselle à Cendrillon. Et l'après-midi, pendant que la mère et ses deux filles jouaient au tennis, au bridge ou faisaient la sieste, la pauvre Cendrillon devait nettoyer toute la maison: l'escalier, le palier, le salon, le balcon avec sa vue imprenable, enfin, tout. Un jour, la famille a reçu une invitation à un bal donné par une vieille famille d'aristocrates. La mère et ses deux filles sont allées au bal, et elles on laissé la pauvre Cendrillon à la maison. Cendrillon pleurait toutes les larmes de son corps dans sa petite chambre quand tout d'un coup, elle a vu une très jolie dame devant elle. Elle portait une ravissante robe en soie avec des diamants et des perles partout. Et elle tenait à la main un petit bâton en or qui faisait des étincelles.

- Qui êtes-vous? a demandé Cendrillon.

- Comment, tu ne me reconnais pas? Je suis ta marraine.

- Ma marraine? Mais vous n'êtes pas Mme Courtois!

- Mais non, bécasse, je suis ton autre marraine, et je vais t'aider à aller au bal! Tu vas aller au jardin du Luxembourg et là, derrière la fontaine Médicis, tu trouveras une grosse...hum... aubergine! Apporte-la-moi.

Cendrillon est allée chercher l'aubergine et sa marraine a touché l'aubergine avec son petit bâton en or. Et tout d'un coup l'aubergine est devenue une magnifique Alpine-Renault décapotable. Mais Cendrillon avait encore l'air triste.

- Regardez mon vieux jean tout déchiré! Je ne peux pas aller au bal comme ça.

Sa marraine a touché le vieux jean de Cendrillon et hop!, Cendrillon portait une ravissante jupe rouge, exactement comme celle qu'elle avait admirée l'autre jour à Prisunic.

La marraine est restée à la maison avec le père (qui n'était pas allé au bal). Elle a sorti une cassette vidéo de son sac, et elle lui fait connaître *L'Amour l'après-midi* qu'il n'avait jamais vu parce qu'il n'allait jamais au cinéma.

Et Cendrillon est allée au bal. Quand le prince (le fils unique de la famille aristocratique) a vu Cendrillon, il a cru que c'était une princesse, il est tout de suite tombé amoureux d'elle, et il a voulu faire sa connaissance. Il s'est approché d'elle et lui a dit:

- Belle princesse, je suis le prince de vos rêves. Je viens d'une vieille famille aristocratique, et je m'appelle Hubert de Pinot-Chambrun.

Et il a dansé avec Cendrillon pendant toute la soirée.

Mais soudain, la cloche a sonné. Il était minuit. Cendrillon avait promis à sa marraine de rentrer bien avant. Elle s'est levée comme un ressort en disant:

- Oh la la, minuit! Il faut que je me sauve, je ne vais pas retrouver mon Alpine. La police va l'emporter!

Elle est partie si vite, qu'elle a oublié d'appuyer sur le bouton de la minuterie. Et comme il faisait très noir dans l'escalier, elle a failli tomber et elle a perdu sa pantoufle de verre.

Le lendemain, le prince, qui avait trouvé la pantoufle de verre, a proclamé:

- Je vais chercher partout la propriétaire de cette pantoufle, et je vais me marier avec elle.

Peu après, chez Cendrillon, quelqu'un a sonné à la porte. Cendrillon s'est dit:

- Ça c'est Hubert! Je reconnais son coup de sonnette!

Quand le Prince Hubert est entré dans la maison, il n'a pas reconnu Cendrillon, et il a dit:

- Comme c'est bizarre, comme c'est curieux, et quelle coïncidence! Je crois avoir vu quelque part la domestique de cette famille! (Parce qu'il croyait évidemment, que Cendrillon était la domestique!)

Et il a dit à Cendrillon et à ses deux soeurs:

- Veuillez avoir l'obligeance d'essayer cette petite pantoufle!

Mais le Prince Hubert, qui jouait très bien son rôle de grand aristocrate, a regardé autour de lui et il a dit:

- Que ces nanas sont mal habillées! Quel taudis infect! Ce n'est qu'une cage à lapins, cette HLM! Un logement pour des ouvriers!

Quand Cendrillon a entendu ça, la moutarde lui est monté au nez. Et elle a dit au prince:

- Des nanas? Un taudis infect?! Des ouvriers!!! Oui, mon père est menuisier, mais sachez, cher Prince, qu'il n'y a pas de sot métier et que la classe ouvrière a les mêmes droits que les descendants des oppresseurs du Moyen Age!

Puis, Cendrillon s'est retournée et, sans un mot, en trois gestes précis, elle l'a envoyé rouler dans la poussière en disant:

- Je n'aime pas qu'on se moque des gens! Et maintenant, je vais me marier avec un beau garçon boucher, dans l'église de la Madeleine, à cause de l'escalier, vous savez. Au revoir, mon Prince. Tenez-vous bien, et soyez sage!

This composition was submitted by Professor Will Browning of Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. It was written by one of his students, Miltos Gerosideris.

Hommage à Monsieur Capretz

Les cheveux gris, longs et drôles
Les plus ridicules, comme d'une folle

Un grand nez comme Astérix,
Son corps gros comme Obélix!

Il parle beaucoup, plus que moi ou toi
Il ressemble plutôt à Mme Courtois

Il me fait rire quand il explique un mot
Parce qu'il mouvoit ses bras comme un robot!*

Il n'est pas dans le vent, tu as vu ses lunettes?
Elles sont si grandes comme les yeux d'un insecte!**

Il est amusant parce qu'il croit qu'il est distingué,
Ça me tue quand il dit "c'est utile pour apprendre le français"!

* *...Parce qu'il lève les bras comme un robot*

** *...Elles sont aussi grandes que les yeux d'un insecte!*

FiA, Fun, and French Culture

Professor Catherine LeGouis currently teaches at Mount Holyoke during the academic year and at Middlebury College during the summer. Here are some excerpts from a recent interview:

My background was strictly literary. I wasn't interested in teaching language *per se*. What happened was that I found *FiA* so compelling that I became very involved in language teaching. As a Frenchwoman, I find *FiA* as rewarding to teach as literature because it's really my culture that is getting across. It's so authentic, I can give students a general sense of the culture that is fundamental to any French person. To my knowledge, you just can't do that with other language teaching materials. When I started teaching with *FiA*, I would come across a scene in the video and think, "It is so true to life". *FiA* describes an entire atmosphere; an entire culture. And that's part of what has made me like it so much.

Starting and Majoring in French in College with *FiA*

With *FiA*, you can accomplish in two years what takes at least twice as much time—if not six years—to accomplish with another method. You can take students who have never had any French and get them all the way into literature classes in four semesters. At Mt. Holyoke, we have students who are not starting French until college and then majoring in French, which was much more difficult to do before. With *FiA*, they learn very quickly. So, they are able to deal with literature much more effectively and much earlier on. What I see emerging out of the *FiA* courses at Mt. Holyoke is a number of excellent students who can really do well in French literature.

FiA Students and French Literature

I started off a group of women last year who took *FiA* with me in a semi-intensive course. They are now in their fourth semester of French (two of them went to Middlebury this summer, and for them, it is the fifth semester). They are now taking my course on decadence in the 1890s—Huysmans, Mallarmé, Verlaine: authors who are notoriously difficult to read - and they are doing fine. They can participate. They have developed a keen sense of cultural context. Some of my colleagues find it difficult to believe.

Two years ago, at the end of the Middlebury summer session, I took a group of early intermediate students through *Huis Clos* in two and a half days and then through *L'Etranger* in about five days. I thought they would be challenged by very factual, what-happened-next questions, but they thought they could do better than that. They wanted a philosophical discussion, and they were able to carry it off. It was amazing.

My students who have learned with *French in Action* really do better than those who have gone the traditional route. They speak better, they write better, and they understand everything I say in class. I get a lot of students at the introduction to literature level who just can't understand the gist of what I'm saying. They seem never to have heard French spoken at a normal rate. The ones who are coming from a *FiA* background don't even bat an eye, because they are used to hearing French spoken at the regular speed.

Using the Video

I use it in class to present the teleplay, working on the text line by line. As I go through the teleplay, I present everything that is going to be focused on in the audio tape and the workbook. I work on new exercises as the situations arise in the teleplay. For example, in lesson 37, the point at which the *ouvreuse* gives the movie tickets back to Robert, and Mireille says, *"elle te les a rendus"*, is actually the beginning of a whole set of exercises in the workbook. So when I get to that sentence in the teleplay, I start the exercises in class. I do that for almost every exercise. I know large portions of the text by heart now, so as soon as I see it on the screen, it triggers the exercise in the workbook in my mind. I also work on the vocabulary in the story, so that when they leave my presentation, the students have already started all the work on the audio tape. When they start working on their own in the workbook, nothing is going to seem completely new.

"My students who have learned with *French in Action* really do better than those who have gone the traditional route."

Grammar and *FiA*

The grammatical structures presented in the lessons give students a very wide range of expression, the maximum range at each level. With other textbooks, the student has a very small range of action because of the linear progression. The grammar in other methods is presented much more traditionally, and it is the kind of grammar that corresponds to the needs of native speakers or linguists, not to the very different needs of people who are learning a second language.

We learn French, or whatever our native language is, without a theoretical grammar book. We didn't start with the *passé composé* or the *futur antérieur* or the *présent de l'indicatif* or anything in particular. We were surrounded by large amounts of our native language. We listened and eventually we figured things out and found our way through, learning to say as much as possible with the little that we had grasped. *French in Action* is not a disorganized presentation of grammar—it's a different arrangement of grammar. It is extremely orderly, extremely rational, and logical. Nothing has been left to chance in the way the students' encounter with grammar is structured.

It is not as if *FiA* starts with the subjunctive and finishes with the present indicative. It is true that it does start with the *futur immédiat* before the present. This is because the presentation of grammar in *FiA* is not dictated by tradition or theoretical considerations, but by the pragmatic requirements of communication and acquisition. Yet from what I know from other textbooks, I really find that *FiA* does present the general points of grammar in roughly the same sequence as other textbooks, with only a few important differences. However, it is inside the sequence that it is totally different: the way it is presented, the way the student is made to intuitively grasp what is going on instead of being told ("You put the pronoun here and the first part of the negative there and the verb there and so on"), the way the student is given examples and is led to use the grammatical structures and then realizes and understands how it works ("Oh, that's where the pronoun goes! That is where the first part of the negative goes!").

FiA, Fun, and French Culture

FiA is fun, and that is a major difference from

Continued on page 8

Sur le Carnet de Tante Georgette

- Noël au balcon; Pâques aux tisons

FiA Bulletin Board

If you need help or information, or can provide help or information to your colleagues, this bulletin board is for you. Please address written notices to the French in Action *Newsletter at 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511*

We love, nous adorons, the newsletter! Tout! Les interviews, les potins de la concierge, le tableau d'honneur. Merci.

Claudine Marquet
Falmouth Academy
Falmouth, MA

Merci à vous, Madame Marquet! Ed.

Once again I would like to express my appreciation of your program and share with you the enthusiasm of my students for *French in Action*...My classes have progressed further into the program than I had originally predicted.

The benefits I have observed in regard to student performance are the following:

1. Improved listening comprehension skills.
2. Reduced anxiety in regard to French being used as the language of instruction within the class.
3. Improved pronunciation through working with the audio-tapes at home.
4. Increased frequency of student-initiated comment in French, often those patterned after expressions presented in *French in Action*.
5. Intensified interest in French speaking people and their culture.

As we all know, actual immersion in the target language is perhaps the best way to master it. Teachers limited to textbooks and the classroom situation often fall short of being able to provide the best environment for language learning, in spite of their sincere efforts to do so. *French in Action* is an excellent resource for bridging this gap.

Thank you once again for providing us with this program.

Gail Stevens
Newark Memorial High School
Newark, CA

P.S. I have also found the organization, presentation, and delivery style modeled in the videos to be of benefit to instructors as well.

Voilà qui fait plaisir! Ed.

Please send me information about appropriate computer materials (IBM compatible). I realize this is a "self-contained" program but we would like to encourage the use of foreign language software in our program.

Jana Brill
Georgetown College
Georgetown, KY

In your next newsletter, how about some info regarding the availiability of *FiA* on laser disk?

Ann Haufle
Whatcom Community College
Bellingham, WA

French in Action *was developed as a stand alone, self-contained program designed to serve as the basis for a fully integrated, multimedia FLIP (Foreign Language Interactive Program). Work on the program is in the research and development phase. Production is dependent upon availiablity of funds. A few* FiA *laser disks have been pressed and are used for this research and development. However, they are not licensed for distribution. Some* FiA *users have developed computer exercises on their own, and may be willing to share their experience with others. No* FiA *computer software has been licensed for distribution at this time. Ed.*

I would like more information about *French in Action*. I teach first and second year French courses at the community college. I have enjoyed reading your newsletter.

Mauricette May
Glendale Community College
Glendale, AZ

Qui voudra bien voler au secours de Madame May et la renseigner? Ed.

I am interested in learning more about *FiA* and would consider it either as a telecourse or as core material. Do you have anything similar for Spanish? Are any workshops/seminars scheduled soon in the midwest?

Sally Borgerson
Jefferson College
Hillsboro, MO

The Annenberg/CPB Project has funded a Spanish project featuring video, print, and audio to be released in 1992. Call 1-800-LEARNER for information. Although no workshops are scheduled in the Midwest at this time, workshops are now being planned for next year. Please contact Mary Coleman at the Yale University Press. Tel: (203) 432-0912.

Echangerais dictionnaire Gaffiot Latin-Français, état neuf, contre jean Lee pré-lavé, même usagé. Ecrire à Marie-Laure Belleau, 18 rue de Vaugirard, Paris 75005 ou téléphoner avant 19 heures 43.26.88.10.

I am a new faculty member in the French department at Russell Sage College and I will be teaching *French in Action* for the first time in the Fall of 1991. I have read the April 1991 issue of the *FiA Newsletter* and have found it very informative and inspiring.

My problem is that I have having a difficult time preparing a syllabus for my beginners' course. Since there is so *much* material in both the workbook and the textbook, I sometimes wonder if it is really possible to finish the first set within a 15-week period. I realize that there are 52 lessons overall, which would average 13 lessons a semester. I have already made a draft of the syllabus for my French 101 course (beginners') which covers lessons 1-13, but somehow I am doubtful about its clarity and organization.

Thus, I would very much appreciate if you could provide me with copies of *carefully* and *consistently* arranged syllabi (covering 4 semesters, from beginning to advanced) that had been used over the years, with big success, by *FiA* instructors. I would be truly

(continued)

Bulletin Board

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grateful for your assistance.

Rafael Robert Delfin
Russell Sage College
Troy, NY

13 lessons per semester seems to be adequate for regular courses in most colleges. Of course, there is no expectation that students will assimilate all of the vocabulary and grammar contained in the text. A considerable amount is there for global comprehension. How much is assimilated will depend on the level and the ability of the students in the class. Does anyone want to share syllabi and suggestions with Professor Delfin? Ed.

I am delighted with the *FiA Newsletter*! I am very interested in incorporating *FiA* in our French program at Brescia. *French in Action* is a great breakthrough in education! Keep me on your mailing list!!!

Mary Ann Snyder
Brescia College
Owensboro, KY

We will! Keep us up to date on what goes on at Brescia et bonne chance! Ed.

What a great idea! Count me in as an enthusiastic participant. Each year I use *FiA* I discover new treasures contained in the program. Your newsletter will help me mine the rich lode even more successfully.

Clifton Garrett
Bakersfield College
Bakersfield, CA

When your newsletter arrived, I sat down and read it from cover to cover, saying over and over, "How wonderful!" What a great job you did in capturing a balanced coverage while doing something that is so desperately needed. Foreign language teachers often feel so isolated because it is usually one person who teaches a particular language at a school. I am "the" French teacher at Burlington County College. Because the tone of each article and of the newsletter as a whole was one of comraderie, one of genuine esprit de corps, I, as a lone user of *French in Action*, no longer feel alone. How you did this is no "mystère et boule de gomme." You conveyed genuine success stories. Quelle joie! Merci.

Carole A. Gavin
Burlington County College
Pemberton, NJ

Il n'y a pas de quoi! Et "Que votre joie demeure," comme dirait Giono. Ed.

Vigano

Continued from page 2

where the subjunctive is used several times, and suddenly it came alive! They saw the lady say, *"Il faut que vous attendiez encore un peu,"* and *"Il faut que j'aille au théatre,"* and we complemented this with the *Pariscope* and *Minitel*. The subjunctive is embedded in the discussion about cinema and theatre in *FiA*. Suddenly, the subjunctive meant something. It was wonderful.

Training Part-Time Teachers in *FiA*

I have a demonstration cassette that I show to the part-time teachers. I give a workshop to show them how it works. I don't hire anybody before he or she has watched at least two or three lessons on how *FiA* is used in the classroom.

I think it is easier to train teachers in *FiA* than in other methods because the training involves coming to see how it is done. They see it used in class. Before, with the traditional method, part-timers were simply given the textbook. Now, they go into the classroom much better prepared than with other methods. Teachers who are not native-born French speakers can learn from *FiA*.

Teachers embrace *FiA* very enthusiastically. We've been giving both teachers and students a questionnaire after six weeks and then again at the end of the semester. One teacher wrote, "I would never want to go back to teaching with the textbook alone." The student responses were 83% enthusiastic and 16% positive with slight restrictions. Usually, if they had a complaint, it was that the tape was too fast. Only 1 out of 95 students who returned the questionnaire said it was boring. He had had some French before.

Going to France After Studying With *FiA*

As I was writing a recommendation for a student, it occurred to me that *FiA* students are incredibly well prepared for going to France. I was writing for a student who was not one of the very top students, but because he had gone through *FiA* and been very enthusiastic about performing the oral skits and listening to the cassettes, he was prepared for the barrage of French that he would be facing. He would be ready to plunge in the first or second week instead of having to wait for five or six weeks until his ear was acclimated to the French way of speaking. Even if *FiA* students have only had a semester of French, they are better prepared for going to France than if they had studied a year of French with a traditional book: they are already immersed in the French way of speaking and behaving, and they hear French spoken at normal speeds from the very beginning.

Sur le Carnet de Tante Amèlie

- Cette pauvre Georgette perd la tête; elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle dit. Elle vieillit! L'autre jour elle disait: "En Avril ne quitte pas un fil..." Qu'est-ce que c'est ce ça? On a toujours dit:

"En Avril, ne te découvre pas d'un fil. En mai, fais ce qu'il te plaît."

Du moins, c'est ce qu'on disait du temps de mon pauvre mari.

Cancans

Les Cancans de la Concierge

Il paraît que Hubert est passé à la télé l'autre jour! Si, si! Une carte postale de Genève m'est tombée sous les yeux, par hasard. Ça disait: "J'ai eu la surprise agréable de tomber hier soir, à la TV française, sur un téléfilm dans lequel "Hubert"—*votre Hubert!*—tenait un petit rôle. Je ne sais pas si c'était un film tout récent ou une reprise. Dans tous les cas, Hubert paraissait un peu plus "empâté." Le film lui, était une comédie légère, amusante, et sans prétention, au rythme allègre. L'héroine de l'histoire, Noëlle (Karine Viard) venait de se faire plaquer par l'ex "Hubert," son fiancé jusque là, et comme elle, conducteur de bus à la RATP... Le titre bilingue du film, outre la parodie directe d'un film américain célèbre, est-il aussi un clin d'oeil à *French in Action*?"

Après enquête, il s'avère que Franck Lapersonne (Hubert dans *FiA*), qui, en fait, passe souvent à la télé, a bien un rôle dans *Strangers dans la nuit*, téléfilm de Sylvain Madigan, passé sur F3 le mardi 8 octobre à 20.45.

Gehr

Continued from page 1

students, in all sincerity, that, if they come to class and practice at hbme, after four years, they will be able to speak French very well. No matter which French-speaking part of the world they go to, they will be able to successfully communicate. I believe that with all my heart with this system. I could not make this promise with something else, but I fully believe in this system.

Success Stories

I had a level one student who was very motivated; he came in on his noon hours, and I tutored him with *FiA*. He went to France and did just fine. After one year of French with me, he tested into third semester French in college, and did well, a B average. And the vocabulary stayed with him. When I see him today, he'll say different things that are directly from the program. I find myself using these little phrases from *FiA*. They are so meaningful.

Another thing that I do is involve them in "French Forensics," a highly competitive state competition. They have done very well at the regional and state levels. All five students that I have entered have received gold medals. It is quite an honor for my students. I feel that their success is in large part due to Capretz. Capretz does not speak slowly. He speaks in a normal cadence and my students are used to this. Last year, I went to Florida for about a week, and a substitute teacher came in. I guess my students had been taking me and the Capretz system for granted, because they just felt that she wasn't speaking normally. They are used to hearing French as it should be spoken. They could tell that she was speaking far too slowly.

Calendar

Events Featuring FiA

October 17, 1991
Workshop
With Pierre Capretz

University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth
Dartmouth, MA

October 24-26, 1991
Foreign Language Association of North Carolina

Research Triangle Park, NC
-Yale University Press Booth

November 22, 1991
Workshop for Secondary School Teachers
With Barbara Meister of the Collegiate School, New York, NY

Washington, DC
3:00pm-5:00pm
CPB Building, 901 E Street NW, 2nd Floor

April 2-5, 1992
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

New York, NY
-Session with Pierre Capretz, et al.
-Yale University Press Booth

April 28, 1992
Workshop
With Pierre Capretz, et al.

Marywood College
Scranton, PA

November 22-26, 1991
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Washington, DC
- Yale University Press Booth

- Presentation by Carol Herron of Emory University on acquiring grammatical structures by guided induction—a comparative study of two different approaches to working with students on grammatical structures that students actively use in *FiA*
Saturday, November 23
5:00pm-6:15pm
WCC, Room 10

- Session with Jeanne Manning of Northern Virginia Community College, Pierre Capretz, and others on various ways to use *FiA* to teach vocabulary, grammar, culture, and writing
Monday, November 24
10:00am-11:15am
WCC, Room 33

- Session with Martha Pereszlenyi Pinter of John Carroll University and John Savage of Kent State University on creative use of video to achieve proficiency in oral communication, reading, and writing
Monday, November 24
11:30am-12:45pm
WCC, Room 33

Become an *FiA* pioneer. Join the network of *FiA* users. Keep in touch with *FiA* and your colleagues. Simply fill out this card, put it in an envelope, and address it to *French in Action Newsletter*, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511

Do you use *FiA* as your core materials?____

As a supplement?____

As a telecourse?____

Comments:

Name_____

Department_____

Institution_____

Address_____

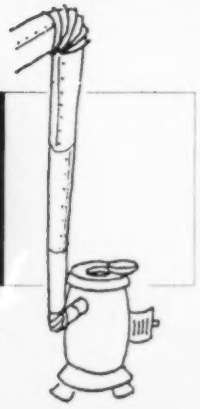
City_____

State_____ Zip_____

Phone_____

Fax_____

Tuyaux



■ Two options concerning where to begin a video presentation:

1) You may skip the beginning of the tape and start with the actual beginning of the lesson; that is, right after the last frame of the *bateau mouche* on the Seine. You thus avoid the shots common to all lessons and the summary in English.

2) Or, alternately, you may use the beginning of the tape as a "mise en train". It is always good to start a class with some exchanges "à bâtons rompus," using words and phrases that are, at that point, very familiar to the students, so that they have a chance to speak in a relaxed way and gear up into speaking French. You can achieve this by showing the tape from the very beginning, at high speed, and asking them to identify what they see. You whiz through the countdown and ask them: "Quels sont ces nombres?" And they have to say them as fast as they flash by. "Quels sont ces lettres?" W!.. G!.. B!.. H!.. "Qui sont ces gens?" La famille de Mireille! "Et ça?" Mireille! "Et ça?" Ses parents!... Son père... Sa mère.. "Et ça?" Sa soeur!.. Tonton Guillaume! Etc... Racing against the video usually wakes students up and gets them excited about their successes.

Ce tuyau nous a été communiqué par Le Vieux Professeur

■ Give students plenty of opportunities to re-enact scenes from the videos, introduce variations, recombine what they have learned to produce something new. They will surprise you with their creativity. When I asked my 5th graders to think of some favorite scenes from lessons 2-5 and to re-enact them and embellish upon them, I was amazed by their retention and ingenuity.

For instance, two boys pretended to be Mireille and Marie-Laure. Mireille was reading "un roman d'aventure" and Marie-Laure was annoying her with questions about it. Then another boy, playing the postman, brought a package and exclaimed: "J'espère que c'est des chocolats!" Marie-Laure tore open the gift. When Mireille asked if her sister would share, Marie-Laure touched Mireille's nose with the tip of her finger and said, "Je ne sais pas, il faut voir, si tu es gentille."

In a shorter scene, one boy pretended to hold a machine gun and shouted, "Je suis un criminel!" Three other boys lined up and, grinning, answered, "Nous sommes les victimes." The "criminel" proceeded to shoot them down and they collapsed laughing.

This tuyau was provided by Barbara Meister from the Collegiate School, New York, NY

Sur le Carnet de Marie-Laure

- Comment vas-tu... yau de poêle?

Le Gouis

Continued from page 4

other methods. I have taught with other materials that are just deadly. They manage to take an exciting language and turn it into the driest, dullest thing in the world. *FiA* is a laugh a minute. I have taught the 52 lessons more than fifteen times now, and I know it almost by heart, and yet I am never tired of it. Just when you are at the end of the hour, everybody is tired, it's Friday, you press the button on the VCR and something so hilarious comes on to the screen, and it is just so funny, everybody bursts out laughing and is totally refreshed and ready for another big effort. I really think that is how students can sustain the effort of such intense learning: they're having a great time.

The humor in *FiA* is one reason why it is a good introduction to French culture. If you can understand the sense of humor of a culture, you are really coming very close to understanding some of the foundations of that culture. If you can start to understand how some of the puns and punchlines of *French in Action* work and apply them to your own situation, as my students are able to do after just a few lessons, you have really reached a level of understanding that is almost impossible to attain with any of the conventional methods.

French in Action

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92A Yale Station
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French in Action

NEWSLETTER

No. III | Special Membership Issue | Spring '92

French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs

By Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadtler-Chester
Department of Foreign Languages
Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts

French in Action,[1] the video-based course designed at Yale University by Pierre Capretz, began its first full 52-segment series on 120 PBS stations throughout the U.S. in September 1987. Within less than a year, textbook publishers began to include questions on their textbook surveys asking to what degree teachers saw video as a necessary component of future foreign language programs. Some institutions immediately bought the full program, pleased with what they had seen and ready to be innovative, but the following year did not adopt *FiA* as a core course. They sought to familiarize themselves with the program before making a decision to adopt it to the exclusion of other materials. In the meantime, they introduced *FiA* as a supplement to their traditional textbooks. Other institutions may have considered purchasing *FiA*, but they were unsure if a video-based course would fit satisfactorily into their budgets or allow them to attain their teaching goals.

At our institution, the *French in Action* program was put into place, in toto, as a team-taught, intensive French course in 1988.[2] This was to be the first team-taught course in the department, the first intensive language course, and the first requirement-level video language course to be offered at the college. Anyone who watches the *FiA* videotapes can immediately perceive the potential benefits of a video-based language course. Television as a language teaching medium has the advantage over both the textbook and the classroom in a number of ways. Television can be more interesting, faster-paced, more culturally authentic, and more entertaining. It can teach culture in the narrow sense, that is, cities and monuments, or it can demonstrate the less obvious cultural behavior of body language, including gestures, facial expressions, and cultural mannerisms, in other words, French truly "in action." Television has at its disposal multiple special effects and production techniques that make it more efficient than the blackboard or the printed page, showing scenes that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. But above all, perhaps, is its ability to present a wealth of material, the breadth and depth of which is inconceivable in the classroom. And the bonus is that a video-based program like *FiA* can convey contexts for meaning that eliminate the need for the viewer's native language. This "*méthode référentielle*," in which French words are matched not with their English equivalents but with what they actually represent in the French culture, allows work with the program to be conducted entirely in French.

This wealth of material may be seen by some as a disadvantage when considering adoption of the *French in Action* program as the core "text." While valuing it as a resource for enrichment, some may feel reticent or skeptical about switching over to the entire program, concerned that a video course would offer exposure without mastery. They may be concerned that the program would teach only slang and informal speech, or, conversely, that the videotapes would be at too high a level of linguistic production to develop transferable skills in the student.[3] They may also fear that

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[1] Pierre Capretz, et al. *French in Action: A Beginning Course in Language and Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

[2] The *French in Action* program consists of three principal parts: the video program, the audio program and the study guide. Accompanying the 52 video episodes is the textbook, consisting of a script of the video dialogue, illustrations of principal vocabulary and idioms, questions on the story ("*mise en oeuvre*"), and a short cultural or literary "*document*" for each lesson. The audio program, comprised of audiocassettes for each lesson, breaks the video script into segments for oral practice. The workbook, the central grammatical component of the program, depends on audio cues for many exercises. Finally, the study guide directs the student to make the most effective use of all program components.

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Model

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FiA would prove useful only to the student who wishes to study abroad, and not provide an adequate foundation for the future study of French literature. They may wonder whether students, while becoming more linguistically and culturally aware, would, nevertheless, be deficient in spelling, accuracy, and knowledge of grammatical structures, or be unable to read or write. In short, would they become passive receivers of knowledge, unable to produce correct, imaginative speech or writing of their own?

In fact, Pierre Capretz's method[4] has answers to these concerns built into the program itself. His method incorporates many new creative approaches to language teaching and learning. It is designed to be used as a whole and when employed as such, we have found that it works. In adopting the Capretz approach, we have also found that it is important to follow the program closely to ensure its success.

Some of the greatest benefits of *French in Action* occur in areas not always measured by traditional testing, such as quickness of response, ability to use humor, skill at circumlocution, willingness to guess, and readiness to take linguistic risks. Still, the students who learned with *FiA* at our institution tested at or above average on the Educational Testing Service Placement examination given at the end of the year, even though this type of test is not an appropriate evaluation tool for the program. Our experience has shown us that the *French in Action* method is highly innovative (even apart from its innovations in the field of video), and that its methodology is often unusual, even heretical. But the program, when taken as a whole, is as intelligently conceived and developed for achieving the ultimate goal of proficiency in a foreign language as any that has appeared to date.

"For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver. "

Capretz's approach is, in essence, modified immersion. Based on observation and inference, the method "gives you the advantages of the immersion method without its chaos."[5] For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver. The innovation of *French in Action* is to take immersion one step further, rendering authentic speech comprehensible by breaking it down into structured components, in other words, to offer immersion coupled with a systematic way of coping with it. Bit by bit, using the arsenal of video techniques at his disposal, and a wealth of camouflaged occasions for repetition, Capretz provides the

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[1] Whereas Marie-Laure and Mireille often use slang, Hubert de Pinot-Chambrun speaks in a formal and literary French worthy of his greatest French forebears. In fact, the construction *"Poulet pour poulet, je préfère..."* (a construction he likes to use), is found in the preface to La Fontaine's Fables: *"Fable pour fable, le lecteur préférera toujours celle de Planude à la mienne."* Jean de la Fontaine, Fables, vol. 1. Paris: Classiques Larousse, 1971 (p. 19).

[4] The *French in Action* method operates uniquely by referring the student to images and actions without recourse to English. Capretz has nonetheless integrated elements from other methods into his own methodology, notably aspects of the audio-lingual method, functional-notional approaches, and a proficiency orientation. Moreover, the workbooks and audiocassettes take advantage of many of the best features of programmed learning.

[5] Capretz, *French in Action*, textbook, Introduction, p. 2.

French in Action

Volume II, Number 1
Special Membership Issue

Contributors: Deborah Fraioli, Mary-Ann Stadtler-Chester, Barry Lydgate
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The *French in Action Newsletter* is published by the French in Action Project in association with Yale University Press and the Annenberg/CPB Project. Subscriptions are free, and can be obtained by completing the form on page 7 and sending it to:

French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

FiA NEWS

Contribute to the FiA *Newsletter*

Do you belong in the *French in Action* Newsletter? We welcome written contributions, suggestions, comments, and questions for any and all of our sections. We reserve the right to edit and publish all submissions without prior notice to their authors, unless requested not to do so.

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The State of Alabama has approved *French in Action* for adoption by the State's public schools. Individual school districts within Alabama are now reviewing the materials for adoption at their schools.

Two recent workshops targeted to the needs of pre-secondary and secondary school *French in Action* teachers were led by Barbara Meister. On the first day of ACTFL conference (11/22), a three-hour workshop was held for 25 teachers at the offices of **The Annenberg/CPB Project**. On 1/13, Ms. Meister presented to 30 teachers of French in Charleston County, **South Carolina**. Beverly Varnado, Coordinator of Humanities at Charleston County School District reported that "(the) teachers were excited about the presentation and grateful to receive information about such an effective instructional strategy."

Both the *French Review* and the *Foreign Language Annals* recently published articles concerning *FiA* and current issues in foreign language pedagogy. The article in *Foreign Language Annals* (Vol. 24, No. 6, 1991), "The Effect of Authentic Oral Texts on Student Listening Comprehension in the Foreign Language Classroom," is written by Carol Herron and Irene Seay, both of Emory University. Raylene Ramsay of Simmons College wrote the article in *French Review* (Vol. 65, No. 2, December 1991) entitled "*French in Action* and the Grammar Question."

Tuyaux

This tuyau was provided by Barry Lydgate, Wellesley College

Wellesley College teaches *French in Action* in a classic sequence: Part I (lessons 2-26) in the first year course (Beginning French), and Part II (lessons 27-52) in the second (Intermediate French). On average, 120 students a year elect the intermediate course. Of these, about half are students new to Wellesley who have had one or more years of French in high school, and have learned with methods and materials other than *FiA*.

By the end of the fall semester, these new students are generally at the same level as their classmates who took the beginning course with *FiA*. However, the first few weeks can be quite difficult for them. Although our placement procedure has assigned them all to the intermediate course, they are at wildly differing levels of competence in the four skills. They need to get to know the characters and the story line, to understand the allusions and the inside jokes. Although many of them have had as many as four years of high school French, they are faced with an unfamiliar pedagogical approach that obliges them to rethink their relationship with the language. They must also learn the habits, so basic to *French in Action*, of hypothesizing about meaning and of maintaining an equilibrium between what is understood now and what is held in temporary limbo, to be clarified and mastered another day.

Here are two suggestions for reviewing lessons 2-26 that will bring new students up to speed and, at the same time, benefit students returning from the beginning course the previous year:

1) The first solution involves reviewing Part I over a three-week period.

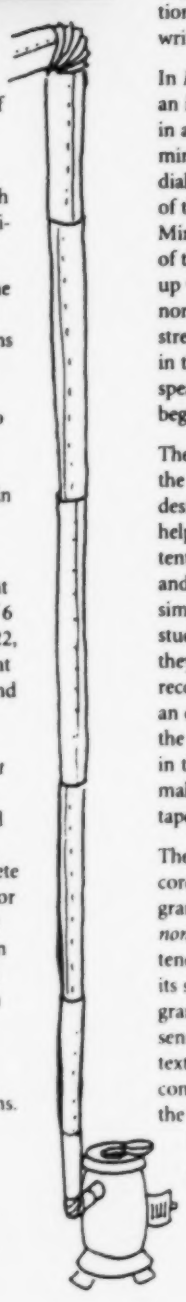
For review, an instructor might present the *feuilleton* sections (story only) of Part I using the *Short Cut to French* videos, presenting lessons 2-11 in week one, lessons 12-19 in week two, and 20-26 in week three. In the class periods following the presentations, instructors can review both the story and the main grammar points of each group of lessons. In preparation for class, students can be asked to review the *Short Cut* segments in the language laboratory, read the corresponding portions of the textbook, and complete a series of written exercises.

This solution will produce familiarity with the story and with the major features of the pedagogical approach.

2) Another solution is to spend the first three weeks reviewing Part I through the use of abridged lessons without audio, interspersed with whole lessons that include the audio program. The advantage to such an approach is that it will familiarize students new to *FiA* with the full panoply of material in the course.

Devoting three full weeks to the review of the 25 lessons, one might spend one class period on each of 6 whole lessons: lessons 12, 14, 19, 22, 23, and 26. These are six important loci of grammatical points and lend themselves flexibly to review of other material. The three video presentations would use *Short Cut* grouped as follows: lessons 2-14, 15-22, and 23-26. Students should have videocassettes of *Short Cut*, along with those of the six complete lessons, available in the language or video lab. Sufficient copies of the workbook for Part I can be put on reserve in the language lab and in the library, so that instructors can use written exercises for the abridged intermediary lessons. Students should work with the audiocassettes of the whole lessons.

This method of review takes advantage of the complete spectrum of *French in Action* materials, and immediately gets students doing more fully what they enjoy most: listening and speaking.



Model

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necessary life preserver. The student not only comes to comprehend a sophisticated level of speech, but also, by internalizing advanced linguistic structures, to use difficult constructions creatively and naturally in speech and writing.

In *French in Action*, each videotape begins with an immersion segment, a 10-minute dialogue in an authentic setting, followed by a 20-minute "lesson" orchestrated by Capretz. The dialogue presents an episode, solely in French, of the ongoing narrative about the activities of Mireille and Robert. The students get the gist of the story by watching the action and picking up visual cues. The speech is authentic and at normal speed, complete with slang, idioms, street noises and sound effects, and variations in the age, accent, and social status of the speakers. Few concessions are made to the beginning language learner at this point.

The remaining lesson part of the tape breaks the dialogue down into smaller parts which are designed to render it comprehensible and to help the student master the linguistic content—vocabulary, idioms, linguistic patterns, and grammar. The lesson is followed by a simple recapitulation quiz that bolsters the students' confidence by showing them what they now know. The video ends with a novel recombination of elements from the lesson in an entertaining *"guignol"* skit. The material in the videotape is then reinforced and expanded in the essential ancillary components that make up the program: the workbooks, audio tapes, study guides, and textbook.

The dialogue in the immersion segment is the core from which the lesson's vocabulary, grammar, and idioms arise. It is the *"sine qua non"* of the lesson, in that all further work tends towards the mastery of this dialogue and its structures. What this means for the way grammar is taught is new and eminently sensible since, in contrast to traditional textbooks in which the dialogue is written in consideration of the grammar to be learned, the Capretz method teaches the grammar to be learned in consideration of the dialogue and with an eye to the students' needs for

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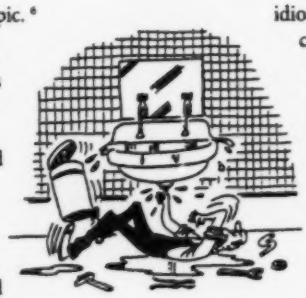
expressing themselves on the same topic. [6]



In a lesson on fixing up the Belleau's vacation house, for example, students are taught the verb "*moderniser*," the very useful expression "*transformer* quelque chose *en* quelque chose," and causative "*faire*." Although the meaning of the causative "*faire*" construction is not hard to grasp intellectually, the crucial distinction between doing something oneself and having it done for you is hard to pick out immediately in the target language, and harder yet for students to learn to use on their own. But the Capretz method comes to their aid offering a multitude of opportunities to learn the construction and to reinforce that learning. [7]

"The speech is authentic and at normal speed, complete with slang, idioms, street noises and sound effects, and variations in the age, accent, and social status of the speakers."

The dialogue segment of the videotape, like any dialogue, includes the repetitions and redundancies found in authentic speech, which textbooks necessarily reduce in order to maintain interest and economize space. Capretz has cleverly structured his dialogues with pedagogical goals in mind, and he and his associates have capitalized on what is specifically useful for language teaching in the video medium. In *FiA*, the characters and their idiosyncrasies have been carefully selected to allow for unobtrusive and humorous repetitions. Marie-Laure, for example, the ten-year old little sister, yells insistently, "*C'est un banc public...c'est un banc public...*" during a fight with her sister Mireille in the Luxembourg Gardens. This repetition, tolerated by the audience in a child throwing a tantrum, teaches that the "c" in "*banc*" is silent. In other instances, Marie-Laure is the medium for exposing potential misunderstandings in the language when she confuses "*belote*" and "*pelote*" or "*Armoricain*" and "*Américain.*" Similarly, Robert confuses "*slip*" meaning briefs with the English word "slip" (feminine undergarment). Characters' obsessions, like Robert's obsession with Mireille, are another way to introduce repetitions. The sentence: "*Robert se demande si Mireille sera chez les Courtois*" becomes the linguistic leitmotif of one lesson. His obsession becomes our chance to hear numerous repetitions of the sentence. Although in *FiA* one is often aware of being assaulted over and over by a particular phrase, there is a certain pleasure and security in the recurrence of the familiar phrase. And since the dialogues are done with wit and sophistication, we willingly suspend our disbelief. Capretz sometimes even pokes fun at his characters and parodies national stereotypes (the aristocrat Hubert, for instance). [8]

In the pedagogical section, Capretz systematically isolates sentences from the dialogue, repeating them more clearly and didactically, without the interference of natural conversation's idiosyncrasies or background noise. Sometimes this alone is enough to reveal something that was missed in the dialogue. Additionally, facial expressions and the opportunity to lip-read can clarify sentences not previously understood. Capretz himself, who recognizes the students' prodigious need for repetition, always shows marvelous tolerance for repetition in his lessons.

At this point also, the meaning of new vocabulary is clarified. In order to explain the definition of words without recourse to English, video is put to its greatest advantage. For instance, to define "*roman*" as "novel," the film shows shot after shot of various novels until the meaning is absolutely clear. By means of a multiplicity of visual examples, the viewer arrives at comprehension of the word through induction. (It is hard to imagine a teacher going to such lengths in the classroom to define one word.) In addition, while the pictures are changing and viewer interest is maintained, the word itself is repeated over and over by Capretz with each new shot, attenuating, in effect, the deadliness of the necessary repetition by the distraction of the changing images. Clearly, the more senses appealed to at once in the learning process, the more the student learns. Television also allows variations of word meaning to be presented quickly and methodically. Thus, "*roman,*" once defined, can easily be expanded to "*roman d'amour*" or "*roman policier*" by offering split-second shots of recognizable book covers. Figurative versus literal meanings can also be taught "referentially" on the screen as in the sentences "*L'arc est tendu*" (taut) and "*Madame Courtois est tendue*" (tense).

In acquiring a language, one needs to learn language usage as well as the meanings of the words. A textbook dialogue rarely offers a word in more than one context, but through the use of video, one can handily cover a variety of situations in which a word may be used. One learns, for instance, that "*plonger*" (to dive) does indeed coincide with the English meaning in that it is not restricted to a dive off a diving board, but can include a plunge from a burning building. Often a number of idiomatic uses of a particular verb are subtly integrated into a particular lesson. In chapter 8, students learn that Oncle Guillaume "*a des*

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[6] However, the dialogues manipulate the content slightly to enhance familiarity with certain grammatical forms. For example, Capretz may sprinkle instances of a new grammatical form in the lessons which precede its introduction as a formal grammar topic.

[7] To gain a concrete idea of how much reinforcement in the form of repetition actually occurs, we took the expression "*faire amener l'eau*" in lesson 34 and counted each instance in the video, audiotapes, workbooks, and textbook. Students either hear the expression or see it written 28 times (several times they see it written and hear it simultaneously) and they are called to produce the expression six times themselves. This does not include, of course, the additional production opportunities that arise in the classroom.

[8] The gentle ironic distancing of Pierre Capretz from the characters (for instance, he gently calls into question Hubert's family's ownership of the château of Chambord) gives the videotapes an extra intellectual depth, which becomes a pleasure to be especially savored by the teacher, whose own interest in the program is the best assurance that the students' interest will be maintained. Furthermore, it permits the students to see that if Capretz can question his own characters, they also need not accept all aspects of the story. The students' active participation is further encouraged in the workbook section "*Mise en scène et réinvention de l'histoire*" where they can deconstruct the original plot line and reinvent it.

FiA Bulletin Board

If you need help or information, or can provide it to your colleagues, this bulletin board is for you. Please address written notices to the French in Action *Newsletter at 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511*

Many of our colleagues ask about *French in Action* broadcasts on public television stations. Is it broadcast in my area? When is it broadcast? On which channel?

French in Action *is broadcast on most major PBS stations. However, programming at each PBS station fluctuates considerably and schedules vary from station to station. In addition, PBS broadcasts are not always listed in the TV Guide. The best way to find out about* **French in Action** *broadcasts in your area is to call the programming director at your local PBS station. If* **French in Action** *is not aired in your area, you can ask your colleagues, friends, students and their parents to call or write to the programming director. This will serve to remind him or her that there is a strong interest in the program.*

Position open for school year '92-93

Saint Paul 's School in Concord, NH is looking for a teacher of French who has experience using **French in Action**. *Applicant should have native/near native fluency. Supervision in the dormitory is expected, as well as assisting in sports. Please send cover letter and C.V. to: Roberta Tenney, Dean of Faculty, Saint Paul's School, 325 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301*

Workshops

Dear Readers:

This fall, we announced that Yale University Press would be sponsoring teacher support workshops. The response was overwhelming. Many of you expressed interest in attending and even co-sponsoring workshops. We'd like to thank you for your thoughtful and insightful responses.

We will be posting information about the workshops in the "Calendar" section of the FiA *newsletter, as well as contacting those of you on our mailing list about workshops in your area. We already have several workshops planned throughout the country. If you are not on our list, please complete the form on page 7, mark the box about workshops, and return it to us.*

Many thanks again. We appreciate your responses, and look forward to hearing from even more of you. —MC

Change of Address

To order the **French in Action** *videos or preview videotapes, the new address for the Annenberg/CPB Project is:* **The Annenberg/ CPB Collection,** *P.O. Box 2345, South Burlington, VT 05407-2345. They can still be reached by phone at 1-800-LEARNER.*

Model

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loisirs," "a du temps," "a de la fortune," "a de la chance," "n'a pas d'enfants" but *"a beaucoup de relations."*

Sometimes cultural usages are presented simultaneously with semantic usage. For instance, when the verb *"embrasser"* is taught, the video clips show not only the traditional two-cheek kiss, and the fact that friends greet each other in this manner, but they also depict children endearingly performing this cultural act as they leave for school, thereby identifying the range of situations in which this activity can be expected as well as defining the word itself.

The pedagogical segment also offers the opportunity to clarify problems presented by *"faux amis."* When Mireille and Robert are shown witnessing an accident as bystanders, it is understood that *"assister à"* does not mean to assist or help. In other instances, video images immediately forestall any confusion over the meaning of words such as *"articulation"* (joint), *"circulation"* (traffic), *"pièce"* (room, coin), and *"relations"* (acquaintances).

Not everything that appears in the video is intended to be learned actively. Sometimes images flash on the screen in such quick succession that viewers are not quite sure what they have seen, yet they absorb the message almost subliminally. This information adds to the students' store of passive knowledge. Movie clips and advertisements from French television change the pace, add interest, and heighten curiosity, demonstrating the actual use of expressions and idioms that have just been presented pedagogically. Seeing these expressions used in real-life situations also confirms to the student their verifiable usefulness in the language.

It is in the pedagogical section of the video that the student first encounters the grammar of each chapter. There is, contrary to what one might expect, a formal grammar presentation in most of the video lessons. To enhance the learning of grammar topics such as verb conjugation, tense formation, adjective agreement, and the use of pronouns, different colors and video techniques are used. Important endings flash on the screen to call the students' attention to them, and alternate flashings are used to contrast potentially confusing elements. Essential grammatical distinctions are often enacted on the screen while the verbal equivalents are shown as subtitles. For example, images rapidly alternate between *"elle promène Fido"* and *"elle se promène."* Capretz repeats a sequence such as this as many times as necessary for the student to assimilate it. Whereas in *FiA* the screen time spent on a particular point is proportional to its importance or its difficulty, students faced with a textbook alone may not recognize what is important and may not concentrate their attention appropriately. The speed and efficiency of video grammar presentations make them more effective than traditional blackboard or textbook presentations.

With the completion of the viewing of the video lesson, the student moves from the role of language receiver to that of language performer. Repetition and reinforcement in the form of active participation of the student now take place with the workbook and the audiotapes. It is in the workbook that grammar is formally taught, with explanations, charts, and exercises. Unlike other grammar books, the *French in Action* workbook does not merely present a topic once, leaving review up to the initiative of the student. Instead, the workbook provides systematic review, optimally spaced throughout the book so that the topic remains familiar. Also typical of the workbook is that the deep pedagogical purpose of some exercises is

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agreeably hidden beneath the surface. [*]

The audiotapes are coordinated with the workbook. Together, the two offer, in addition to grammar practice, further opportunity for listening, speaking, and writing. The student gets essential practice in repeating, phrase by phrase, the basic sentences of the video dialogue. These basic sentences become the answers to questions that periodically break up

"In traditional textbooks, we know all too well what the grammatical structure of the lesson is..."

the dialogue. The student moves quickly and confidently through the answers , since the answer to each question is always the material just uttered. By the end of the workbook lesson, the student is ready for *"Libération de l'expression,"* a section for free expression and creative recombination of story elements. The novel use of open-ended questions in this section furthers self-expression by inviting unlimited personal input. For instance, when asked, *"De quoi peut-on se tromper?"*, the student can answer, *"de porte," "de numéro de téléphone," "de planète..."* Or, if asked, *"Dans quoi peut-on se sentir bien?"* the response can be, *"son short," "sa peau," "son fauteuil..."* Even within the limits of the students' experience with the language, the number of original, even humorous responses of which they are capable is surprisingly gratifying. In fact, originality and humor abound in the *FiA* classroom.

After 52 lessons of *French in Action*, a reasonable proficiency in speaking French can be attained. This ability should allow the student to function almost immediately upon arrival in the foreign culture, but it is not limited to French for travelers. Beyond the more obvious practical purpose of certain vignettes or exercises is the less evident linguistic structure that is being inculcated. *FiA* makes no effort to expose its pedagogical strategies nor are they, by any means, always obvious. The linguistic goals of each lesson are clearly stated in the study guide, so that disguising the grammatical objectives elsewhere in the lesson seems wholly appropriate, since undoubtedly the heart of the program's success is the feeling it generates that learning French is fun and entertaining. We should not assume that the program is in any way haphazard or superficial just because we do not see its inner workings. In traditional textbooks, we know all too well what the grammatical structure of the lesson is and it was clearly the intention of *FiA* to avoid this mode of presentation.

Through the Capretz method, the student of *FiA* has the potential to understand and use much more sophisticated language than does the user of a traditional textbook. The method concentrates on making language of natural complexity comprehensible and then functional, instead of introducing a watered-down version of the language and then expecting that somehow, although a model for it has never been offered, students will arrive at speech of natural complexity on their own. It is as if in *FiA* someone were given a puzzle, watched it be taken apart, and then received instruction on how to put it back together again, not only in the original way, but also in new combinations. Such a process would seem to have positive implications for the students' future ability to handle the language of literary texts in upper-level courses.

The videotapes in *FiA* prove that most of the traditional function of the language textbook can be taken over by video and that the visual element can have a much bigger role than previously thought in what is generally considered an essentially verbal process. Indeed, a picture can be worth a thousand words. Through visual means, the meanings of words can be established and their range of meaning, both figurative and literal, range of usage, and appropriate speech contexts delineated. That all this information is imparted in the agreeable context of a witty and engaging story, aided by cartoons, television commercials, movie clips, interviews, and outstanding cultural footage, underscores the superiority of the medium.

The all-French format, which might seem frightening to the students at first, becomes non-threatening when they realize how much

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[*] In an early workbook lesson, emphasis is placed on infinitive endings. This ensures that when the *"futur immédiat"* is introduced in the following lesson, the student can focus on the forms of *"aller"* since the infinitive forms are already ingrained.

Cancans

Les Cancans de la Concierge

—Vous ne savez pas? Il paraît que Hubert fait dans l'immobilier!

—Hubert? Non, ce n'est pas lui, ce sont ses oncles qui contruisent des HLM!!

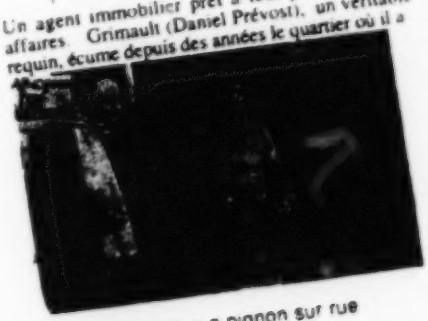
—Non, non! Lui, Hubert, j'ai entendu dire qu'il était devenu agent immobiler, un véritable requin d'ailleurs, un magouilleur qui chasse les locataires qui le gênent, reloge les vieillards en asile...une ordure!

—Mais non! Ce n'est pas Hubert! C'est Franck Lapersonne...enfin, non, je veux dire: Franck Lapersonne, l'acteur qui joue Hubert dans *French in Action*, eh bien, il joue Leduc, un agent immobilier pas très scrupuleux, dans *Pognon sur rue*, une comédie de J.L. Bertucelli qui est passée à la télévision suisse, sur TSR, en novembre dernier.

—Ah bon! Je me disais aussi...un jeune homme si comme il faut...

—Il ne faut pas croire tout ce qu'on dit!

—Non...mais, quand même, il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu, comme dit Mademoiselle Georgette.



Un agent immobilier prêt à tout pour faire des affaires. Grimault (Daniel Prévost), un véritable requin, écume depuis des années le quartier où il a

Quand le pognon a pignon sur rue

Model

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opportunity they will have to make educated guesses before they are expected to understand. In fact, they will gradually see that understanding is not dependent on knowing each English equivalent and that failing to understand every word is not catastrophic. Since they are constantly analyzing clues for the meaning, the students become willing guessers. Also, immersed as they are in the foreign language, they are not paralyzed with fear about speaking, and, in time, they become experimenters in the language and verbal risk-takers. Initially, they use mostly ready-made expressions from the lesson, but even at the beginning they apply these to the expression of their own thought. Gradually, this kind of response gives way to increased inventiveness as the students see which parts of a given expression allow novel recombination and which remain constant.

"Using *French in Action*, students inevitably build confidence in their ability. The program is structured so that they will rarely give wrong answers if they have followed all the steps."

Using *French in Action*, students inevitably build confidence in their ability. The program is structured so that they will rarely give wrong answers if they have followed all the steps. Demands are not made on them until they are capable of performing the linguistic task.

Because the various components of the program are so intricately balanced and complementary, and because the periodic reappearance of the various linguistic structures is so predictable, learning the material seems natural and perhaps even inevitable to students. There is a greater chance of success in a program where all the parts work together to produce the final result and, in *FiA*, this integration seems to be an important key to the students' achievement. Since all the constituent parts of the program bear directly on the task the students have been set, that is to master the material in the dialogue, they have more incentive than in other programs to do the work in the ancillary components.

At Yale, years of work went into the initial design of this French language program. Major funding from the Annenberg/CPB Project enabled it to become the video creation known as *French in Action*. The result is a program of the highest production quality, which not only gets the most out of the video medium, but also represents a synthesis of the best in foreign language methodologies. As such, *French in Action* becomes the standard against which future language programs should be measured.

The authors would like to express their appreciation to Wilga M. Rivers for reading this article and making suggestions.

Calendar

Events Featuring FiA

April 2-5, 1992
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
The New York Hilton , New York, NY
Yale University Press Booth

-Friday, April 4, 1992, 1:00 p.m.
Session with Pierre Capretz:
"The Teacher as Video Mediator"

-Saturday, April 5, 1992 , 2:30 - 5:00 p.m.
Workshop for Secondary School Teachers with Barbara Meister at Collegiate School.

April 9-12, 1992
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Hyatt-Regency, Dearborn, MI
Yale University Press Booth

- Saturday, April 11, 1992, 1:30-5:00 p.m.
Workshop for *FiA* teachers with Pierre Capretz and Barbara Meister at the University of Michigan, Dearborn

April 28, 1992
Workshop for French in Action Teachers
with Pierre Capretz and Barbara Meister
Marywood College , Scranton, PA

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Do you use *FiA* as your core materials?_____

As a supplement?_____

As a telecourse?_____

Are you interested in workshops?_____

Comments:

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Tableau d'Honneur

The following "*réinvention*" is adapted from a writing exercise done by Hakan Avci, a student in the introductory intensive French course at Yale (after lesson 34).

Lili

Robert arrive dans la rue de Vaugirard, trouve le numéro 18, et entre dans le vestibule. Il cherche la liste des locataires mais il ne la trouve pas ... parce qu'il n'y en a pas. Alors il se dirige vers la porte de la loge de la concierge et frappe. Une jeune fille souriante ouvre.

La concierge: Oui, Monsieur?

Robert: Les Belleau s'il vous plaît, c'est à quel étage?

La concierge: C'est au quatrième étage à droite... Vous venez pour voir Mireille?

Robert: Vous la connaissez?

La concierge: Si je la connais! Bien sûr que je la connais! C'est une drôle de fille.

Robert: Ah oui? Pourquoi dites-vous ça?

La concierge: Oh, je ne sais pas, moi... Ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est qu'elle a des amis bizarres. Tenez, par exemple, elle avait un ami norvégien qui était étudiant à la Sorbonne, comme elle. C'était un peintre tout à fait extraordinaire ... mais, aussi c'était un psychopathe, vous savez. Il venait souvent ici, avant. Mais plus maintenant. Parce qu'il est à l'hôpital maintenant. Mireille m'a dit qu'il s'était coupé un petit doigt et le lui avait envoyé, par la poste, parce qu'il l'aimait.

Robert: Sans blague! Rien que ça? Ça a dû être horrible pour elle.

La concierge: Oh non, pas du tout. Elle a un caractère très calme. Même que ce garçon stupide avait oublié son anneau sur le doigt. Elle l'a vendu, et avec l'argent elle a acheté quelques souris vivantes pour Lili.

Robert: Lili? Des souris? Je ne comprends pas très bien.

La concierge: Lili, c'est le serpent de Mireille, un boa. Il mange toujours des souris vivantes. Il aime ça. C'est un animal énorme, mais il n'attaque jamais personne ... enfin presque jamais. Je dis presque jamais, parce qu'il y a un an, il a déchiré le pantalon du plombier. Mais il ne lui a pas fait mal. Enfin, pas vraiment...

Robert: Oh, la, la, mais c'est inquiétant tout ça! Je n'étais pas au courant, moi! Je viens de rencontrer Mireille il y a quelques jours. Je suis invité à dîner chez eux, ce soir.

La concierge: Très bien, mais soyez prudent. Mme Belleau est une excellente cuisinière, mais elle adore créer des plats extraordinaires et quelquefois dangereux. On dit qu'un ami de M. Belleau a failli mourir à cause des cèpes aux framboises que Mme Belleau lui a servi. Enfin, Mireille m'a dit que ce Monsieur n'était pas exactement un ami de M. Belleau, mais seulement un autre ingénieur de chez Renault que M. Belleau n'aimait pas beaucoup.

A ce moment là, Robert s'aperçoit qu'il n'a pas très faim. Il remercie la concierge et il se dirige vers la porte de l'immeuble. Quand il se retrouve dans la rue de Vaugirard il commence à courir dans la direction du Home Latin. Il ne prend pas le métro parce qu'il a peur de se perdre, mais il court, il court pour aller vite manger au restau-U. Un repas simple mais équilibré, san cèpes et sans framboises.

French in Action

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French in Action

NEWSLETTER

No. IV | *"Creating a network of French in Action users"* | Fall '92

French in Action at Gallaudet:

breaking language barriers

Professor Mark Weinberg and his colleagues are piloting *French in Action* at Gallaudet University where a specially modified version of the course is being designed for deaf students.

Professor Weinberg and Gallaudet's *FiA* team explain why *FiA's* visual approach to language learning would be so effective for his students:

Many students tend to regard language acquisition as a compartmentalized task involving memorization of isolated vocabulary terms and grammatical rules. These students experience difficulty in the concrete application of such information because they cannot always strike a working balance between abstraction and function. The consequences are twofold: 1. Frustration and a feeling of personal inadequacy to accomplish what appears to be an overwhelming and seemingly futile task, with ensuing loss of interest in the subject matter; 2. After some degree of grammatical mastery is achieved, a false sense of competency which inevitably leads to disillusionment when actual communication is attempted.

Reading is often done word-by-word rather than globally. Looking up each word in a bilingual dictionary, then writing down the first given English equivalent above the French text is a common procedure. The inadequacies and tediousness of this approach are obvious.

"...a clearer understanding of the spontaneous nature of language and... a sensitivity to the functional application of abstract grammatical notions..."

In many instances no doubt, the problems students face in language acquisition stem from lack of exposure to the interactive nature of language. It seems only normal that misconceptions would arise concerning the purpose of language in general, the value of learning a language and the way to go about such a task. Despite the best intentions and expertise, teaching methods, goals, and measurement of student achievement can foster this situation. Cultural information and much of the rapport between behavior and the written or spoken code (the very heart of language, what makes it an effective means of communication) is typically difficult to integrate into the traditional curriculum because of time limitations. Such considerations often become an appendage rather than an integral part of the course even though teachers and students alike agree on their instructional value and the personal enrichment which can be derived from them.

Instructional advantages of the *FiA* program for Gallaudet students

The *FiA* program represents a highly desirable instructional program for Gallaudet students for several reasons: Methodology and objectives focus on "total language teaching." Language and culture are presented simultaneously through "planned immersion" which closely simulates the on-location experience. The aim is the development of "communicative proficiency through watching real people interact in true-life situations." The video scenarios acquaint students with "linguistic distinctions appropriate to diverse social exchanges." Most importantly, the *FiA* program makes students realize that "the acquisition of a language does not merely entail learning grammatical structures but depends on a complex system of verbal and non-verbal

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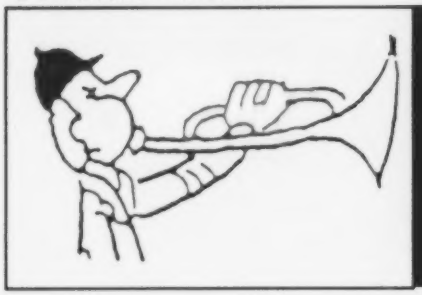

Tableau d'Honneur

This "*réinvention*" by Tessa Crowley, Polly Markos, and Nikki Mullaney, students at the Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington, Maryland, was submitted by their teacher, Sister Jeanne Buisson, C.S.C.:

LE PETIT CHAPERON ROUGE

Il était une fois une charmante petite fille qui portait un imperméable rouge. On l'appelait le Petit Chaperon Rouge. Un jour sa mère lui dit: "Ta grand-mère est malade. J'ai fait de la soupe pour elle. Je te prie de la lui apporter."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge dit: "D'accord, je vais la lui apporter. Mais, est-ce que tu sais où je pourrais louer une voiture?" (C'était une fille moderne!)

La Maman: "Oui, chez Avis! Va au garage Exxon, en bas du Boulevard Saint Michel, si tu veux."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: : "Merci, Maman. Au revoir!"

Au garage Avis.

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Bonjour, Monsieur. Je voudrais louer une voiture pour la journée."

Le garagiste : "Oui. Qu'est-ce que vous voulez? Une grosse ou une petite voiture? Changement de vitesse automatique ou manuel?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Donnez-moi la moins chère. Par exemple, cette R5, là-bas."

Le garagiste : "D'accord! Je peux vous la donner."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Formidable! C'est combien pour la journée?"

Le garagiste : "500F."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Très bien, je la prends." (C'était une petite fille très riche!)

Le garagiste : "Si vous voulez bien me donner votre permis de conduire...Ah, merci."

Quelques minutes plus tard.

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Merci! Au revoir!"

Le garagiste : "Au revoir! Bonne route!"

Pendant que le Petit Chaperon Rouge passe devant le lion (de la place Denfert Rochereau), qu'est-ce qu'elle voit? Un loup! Un grand méchant loup horrible avec un chapeau noir, dans une voiture noire. Il se penche à la portière et il lui demande: "Pardon, ma petite, est-ce que tu as un peu de moutarde?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "De la moutarde? Mais bien sûr! J'ai de la Grey-Poupon."

Le loup : "Ah, très bien. Merci. Et où vas-tu, ma petite?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "Je vais chez ma grand-mère, lui apporter cette soupe."
Elle ne savait pas qu'il ne faut pas parler aux gens qu'on ne connait pas. Sa maman le lui avait dit, mais elle l'avait oublié.

Le loup: "Et où habite-elle? C'est par ici? C'est par là? C'est à coté?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Non, c'est par là. C'est tout près."

Le loup: "Faisons la course, tu veux? Tu prendras cette route -là et moi, je prendrai celle-ci. Nous verrons qui arrivera la premier."

Bien sur, c'est le loup qui arrive le premier à la maison de la grand-mère. Il frappe à la porte et il parle avec une petite voix pointue. (Il veut imiter la voix d'une petite fille, mais en réalité, il parle comme Tante Georgette!)

Le loup: "Ma chère grand-mère, c'est moi, le Petit Chaperon Rouge."

Un monsieur ouvre.

Le monsieur: "Qui cherchez-vous?"

Le loup: "Excusez-moi, Monsieur, Madame Chaperon Rouge, c'est bien ici?"

Le monsieur: "Ah, non, Monsieur, non! Mme Chaperon Rouge n'est pas ici, non, vous vous êtes trompé de porte. Mme Chaperon Rouge, c'est à coté, la maison à coté..."

Le loup: "Excusez-moi, Monsieur, je suis désolé de vous avoir dérangé, excusez-moi..."

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French in Action
NEWSLETTER
Number IV
Contributors: Elizabeth Berwanger, Tessa Crowley, Jeffrey Fox, Barbara Knauf, Jeanne Manning, Polly Markos, Nikki Mullaney, Lynn Smith, Mark Weinberg

Newsletter Editor for Yale University Press: Mary Coleman
The French in Action Newsletter is published by the French in Action Project in association with Yale University Press and the Annenberg/CPB Project. For subscription information, please see page 7.

French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

French in Action: The Distant Learner

Since its premier in 1987, many colleges and universities have used *French in Action* as a telecourse for distant learners. These learners are usually older than traditional students, and they cannot attend regular on-campus classes because of work or family commitments. Distant learners work more independently, watching the television programs and reading the print materials at home or work, with guidance from the course faculty through a variety of communication and instructional techniques.

Distant learners have benefitted in recent years from the expansion of such communication technologies as fax machines, voice mail, and electronic mail. The real challenge, especially with foreign language courses, is how to humanize these electronic media and to create interaction between faculty and students. What follows are two examples of colleges that have successfully met the challenge of distance learning using *French in Action* — Northern Virginia Community College and Colorado State University.

Northern Virginia Community College

In 1990-91, Northern Virginia Community College, which has five campuses and 35, 195 students, offered *French in Action* as its first foreign language telecourse.

FiA telecourse students had the same assignments, the same expectations, and the same course credit as our on-campus French course. However, we adapted the telecourse by adding four, college-produced, 30-minute televised segments -- an orientation and three review sessions before major tests. We also made the telecourse more flexible by encouraging students to fax us their compositions and to leave their dialogues and receive instructor feedback on our 24-hour voice mail machine.

From student evaluations, we have learned that the major advantages of the televised course are flexibility and adaptability. One student wrote, "I can view the lessons at my own pace and on my own schedule. If this approach were not available, I would not be able to be enrolled in the course."

But, do students learn from *French In Action* ? Yes! Their speaking skills are comparable to my on-campus students. Their compositions are better, more imaginative, perhaps reflecting the level of maturity of many telecourse students. Because I gave the same tests to three groups of students -- on-campus, teleconference, and telecourse -- I know that the test scores of the groups are comparable.

We feel we attracted students to our *FiA* telecourses who would not have taken a course at all, and we will continue to offer *French in Action* .

Students are enthusiastic about the visual and aural approach of *French in Action*. One student wrote to me recently, "I'm moving and can't continue your course. How will I know what happened to Mireille and Robert? How will I find out who the Man in Black is?" Let's hope she finds another institution that will offer *French in Action* as a telecourse!
-Jeanne L. Manning

Colorado State University

In January 1988, I began developing *French in Action* into four semesters of freshman and sophomore telecourses for Colorado State University. To date over 120 students have taken these telecourses. In fact, I have been so impressed by *FiA's* fascinating method, its spectacular on-site filming, and its compelling story line that I also use *FiA* in on-campus classes.

One of the strongest aspects of *FiA* is its tutorial. Each week students spend from six to eight hours on the video, audio, and print materials before sending me a quiz from the study guide, a short essay , and a short tape. Thus, students must assume the responsibility and work through an entire, carefully guided sequence before I ever see their work. My role is tutor, modeling phrases and taping suggestions right onto the students' recordings.

Though I never see them, some of my telecourse students take on more personality than some of my on-campus students. In a class of 25, after all, it is not very difficult to find anonymity. But with a tape recorder, there is no anonymity...only accountability.

French in Action has affected my traditional, on-campus course. I now require all my beginning and intermediate French students on campus to use the same "dual recording" process we use for telecourse students.

Instead of working to ensure a classroom standard for my telecourse students, I have found myself doing the opposite. The more accelerated proficiency expectations in the telecourse have become the new standard for listening and speaking in my classroom on campus.
-Elizabeth Berwanger

Jeanne L. Manning, now retired, was Associate Professor of French at Northern Virginia Community College.

Elizabeth Berwanger is Lecturer, Coordinator of *French in Action* Telecourses, and Coordinator of Video-enhanced Instruction in First and Second Year French at Colorado State University.

French in Action is part of the Annenberg/CPB Collection. These two stories are reprinted from an article in the fall 1992 issue of The Agenda, a publication of the PBS Adult Learning Service.

If you would like to receive a free copy of a new report containing five case studies about colleges that are using *French in Action* as a telecourse for distant learners (including longer reports on Northern Virginia Community College and Colorado State University), please write to: Lynn Smith, The Annenberg/CPB Project, 901 E Street NW, Washington DC, 20004

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Gallaudet

continued from page 1

communication, gestures, looks, attitudes, behavior, intonation and cultural conventions and assumptions." (*FiA Instructor's Guide*, chapter 1, p. viii)

Presentation and recapitulation of material during the video lesson are carefully sequenced, yet give the impression of being nonlinear. The viewer has the feeling that several things are happening at once, as they do in real communication. The program makes use of multimedia. Both these facets of the *FiA* approach reinforce the notion that language is made up of diverse elements. This should give students a clearer understanding of the spontaneous nature of language and help them develop a sensitivity to the functional application of abstract grammatical notions.

Thanks to *FiA's* contextual approach, students should gain a better understanding of how languages work within sociocultural frameworks. Additional benefits could include: development of better study habits through increased motivation, improvement of deductive skills, greater confidence and self-reliance in problem-solving and in dealing with unknown situations, and heightened awareness of the advantages of learning a foreign language as a means of communication and as the key to a different culture.

Two other important considerations are the visually attractive quality of the *FiA* video component and the fact that characters in the scenario often make use of nonverbal communication. Moreover, the combination of the mock classroom scenes and the storyline scenarios is an ingenious way to allow for the use of two levels of French: Characters in the story line scenario communicate at a normal rate with true-to-life French, while those in the classroom use simplified French at a slower rate. Students are thus exposed to the language in its natural form through the storyline, yet gain a sense of peer presence through the mock classroom: students in the video exhibit frustrations, humor and general behavior typical of the classroom dynamics. The instructor in the mock classroom is congenial and amusing yet displays an aura of expertise. These behavioral elements could have positive effects on students' attitudes toward their own classroom, classmates and instructor.

Traditional and FiA approaches compared

Traditional approaches frequently stress the presentation and study of selected grammar points at the onset of a given lesson. Assignment and correction of written exercises which apply the grammar in question follows. If assigned, readings are sometimes accompanied by written exercises which test content comprehension and are often grammar-based. Time permitting, cultural material is presented. Correction of exercises is often done as a group in the classroom, using student answers as models. On tests, students are to display mastery of grammatical points by completing exercises and answering questions similar or identical to those done in class and as homework.

The FiA program represents a departure from traditional approaches in that it places greater responsibility on the student. This encouragement of learner autonomy does not, however, completely abandon the student to cope with acquisition in isolation. Constant guidance is given at every stage. Since contextual situations are presented before grammar, students are confronted with the language as they would be in real life. Grammatical points are introduced indirectly at first during the video segment through examples and repetition. When, following this preliminary phase, grammar notions appear in the workbook accompanied by brief explanations, students should be able to grasp them more readily because they will have already been exposed to examples of usage a number of times. This approach should build confidence by reducing "grammar trauma" in students who are naturally inclined to shy away from analyzing abstract linguistic elements.

The focus on individual lab work permits students to concentrate on their own weaknesses and frees up class time. Exercises are designed to allow students to correct most of their own work, leaving class time for more stimulating and challenging activities. Classroom interaction thus becomes an extension and enhancement of individual work, rather than the opposite (more traditional) format. Instructors are advised to stress the participatory, collective nature of such activities and aim at creating a natural, relaxed atmosphere in order to lessen inhibitions and fears of making errors. A remark in the Instructor's Guide bears witness to this positive, open pedagogical stance adopted by the authors of FiA: "Teacher and students need to remember that in communication any response is a great triumph, and the only defeat is silence (p. xxvi)."

Cancans

Les Cancans de la Concierge

--Vous avez vu Mireille à la télé dimanche soir?
--Mireille? Non! Elle est passée à la télé?
--Oui, enfin, non! Je veux dire l'actrice, **Valérie Allain**. Elle était à TF1, dans un film, les nouveaux tricheurs, que ça s'appelle.
--Ah, Les Tricheurs, je connais. C'est un vieux film! Un film de Marcel Carné. C'est pas mal du tout...mais Valérie Allain ne joue pas là-dedans! Elle n'était sans doute même pas née quand Carné a tourné ça!
-Oui, mais ça, ça s'appelle les nouveaux tricheurs, c'est autre chose!
-Ah, bon! Vous m'en direz tant! Eh bien, non, je ne l'ai pas vu.
--Dommage! Oh, le film ne casse rien...mais elle était bien mignonne.

TF1 – 22.50

Les nouveaux tricheurs

Ciné-dimanche: 2e film
France 1987
Comédie de mœurs
Durée 100'
Réalisation de Michael Schock
Rémi Martin ..... Marc
Valérie Allain ..... Christine

La vie amoureuse et tourmentée de jeunes gens; Marc, un dragueur impénitent, sème le trouble et perturbe les couples. Lors d'une course-poursuite suicidaire avec la police, Marc se tue... Ces tricheurs-ci évoquent ceux de Carné. Un certain formalisme et des situations étriquées.

Tableau

continued from page 2

Quelques minutes plus tard, le loup frappe à la porte et parle avec une petite voix pointue.

Le loup: "Ma chère grand-mère, c'est moi, le Petit Chaperon Rouge."

La grand-mère: "Ah, ma petite Minouche! C'est toi? Mais, Ça fait une éternité qu'on ne t'a pas vue! Entre, s'il te plaît."

Alors le loup entre et il mange la grand-mère, parce qu'il avait très faim. Mais il n'est pas content parce que la vaisselle est sale! La fourchette est pleine de jaune d'oeuf. Il dit: "Qu'est ce que c'est que ça? On ne lave plus la vaisselle dans cette maison! C'est incroyable! Et les couteaux qui ne coupent pas! Oh, là là! Si on ne peut plus manger une grand-mère tranquillement maintenant! Où va-t-on!" Quelques moments après, le Petit Chaperon Rouge frappe à la porte de la maison.

Le loup: "Entre, ma chère enfant. Appuie sur le bouton et la porte s'ouvrira."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge pense: "Tiens, Grand-mère doit avoir très mal à la gorge."

Elle entre et met la soupe qu'elle avait apportée sur la table.

Le loup: "Bonjour, Bibiche. Comment ça va?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Grand-mère, vous avez l'air bien étrange."

Le loup: "Ah, oui?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Grand-mère, que vous avez de grands yeux noirs!"

Le loup: "C'est pour mieux te voir, mon enfant."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Grand-mère, que vous avez une grande moustache."

Le loup: "C'est l'âge, ma petite!"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Grand-mère, que vous avez de grandes dents pointues!"

Le loup: "Oui, c'est pour te manger!"

Et le loup bondit sur le Petit Chaperon Rouge pour la manger. Mais, à cet instant, un jeune homme, appelé Robert, passe et entend les cris de la petite fille. Il se précipite dans la maison juste à temps pour sauver la petite fille. Ça, c'est un homme courageux!

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Juste au moment où vous êtes arrivé, j'ai réalisé que ce n'était pas une vraie."

Robert: "Qu'est-ce que tu veux dire, 'ce n'était pas une vraie'?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Ce n'était pas une vraie grand-mère."

Robert: "Comment le sais-tu?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Parce qu'elle avait de la moustache."

Robert: "Ce n'est pas une raison. Il y a sûrement des grand-mères qui ont de la moustache...."

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: "Peut-être, oui. Mais elle, elle avait une moustache...comme ça!"

Et la grand-mère? Ah oui, la grand-mère, c'est vrai! Eh bien, la grand-mère, oui, oui, on l'a retrouvée vivante...quand on a fait cuire le loup au barbecue. Elle était à peu près intacte, juste une petite éraflure sur la joue gauche...(Mais le loup était un peu dur. Trop cuit!)

Calendar

Events Featuring FiA

October 9, 1992 - 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Workshop for FiA Teachers
with Pierre Capretz WVIZ-TV 25, Cleveland, OH

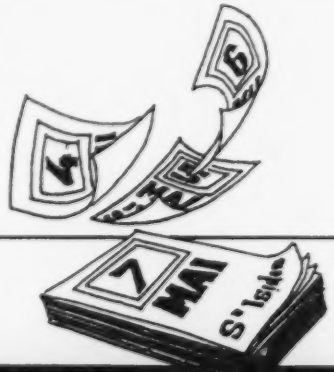
October 22-25, 1992
Foreign Language Association of North Carolina (FLANC)
Holiday Inn Four Seasons, Greensboro, NC
-Thursday, October 22, 1992 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Half-day workshop: Video: Changing the way languages are taught
with Pierre Capretz

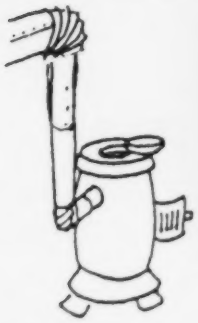
October 23-24, 1992
Mid-Atlantic AATF
Holiday Inn, Independence Mall, Philadelphia, PA
-Saturday, October 24, 1992 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.
breakfast presentation by Pierre Capretz

November 2 , 1992
Georgia Independent Schools Association
Sessions with Barbara Meister (Collegiate School), Peggy Beauvois (University of Tennessee), and Anna Boller (Westminster School)

November 19-22, 1992
ACTFL
Hyatt-Regency, Rosemount, IL
-Sunday November 22, 1992 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.
Session with Pierre Capretz

For more information about these and other *FiA* events, please contact Mary





Tuyaux

This ***tuyau*** was provided by Barbara Knauf of Yale University

Having your class write a collective novel is a good way to give them a sense of their collective achievement -- and to create a great *imparfait vs. passé composé* exercise by the way:

1. Announce to your class that, as a *devoir écrit*, everybody will write a chapter for a collective novel. Together, choose names for a hero, heroine -- or both, and decide on chapter titles. A *roman de formation*, spanning the heroes' adventurous lives from birth to marriage, death or mysterious disappearance, works well to assure some continuity *(souvent saugrenue!)*. Every student picks one chapter heading, and writes the chapter (really just a paragraph) for the next day.
2. Students are asked to obey two rules for the composition: 1) employ only the present tense ; 2) make sure that their chapter contains both some action or event, and a description of the *arrière-plan*.
3. Collect the chapters, correct them, and put them together (typing it up works best).
4. Hand out the corrected "novel" and use it as an *imparfait vs. passé composé* exercise by reading it together in class and transposing it into the past (that's why you want both events and descriptions).

Chances are that the "novel" will be hilarious, and that the whole class will be impressed by and justly proud of this collective chef d'oeuvre!

This ***tuyau*** (syllabus) was provided by Jeffrey Fox of the College of DuPage

FRENCH 101
Syllabus
Credit: 5 hours.
Pre-requisite: None.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

There is a theory about learning a foreign language -- acquire it first, and then learn it.

In our class we do exactly that, by immersing ourselves in a story about people who only speak French. Indeed, we watch a movie -- an on-going story-- about some French people -- Mireille, a pretty young woman; Marie Laure, her cute little sister who is always getting into trouble; Robert, the handsome American who falls in love with Mireille; Jean-Pierre, the obnoxious pick-up artist; and family, friends and others who make up the cast of *French in Action*.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Every Monday we watch the movie -- one lesson every five-day week. I ask you some questions when the movie ends. You do the part of the audiotape called *Mise en oeuvre* at home on Monday night.

On Tuesday, we go over the movie again, and with our portable language lab, go over some of the *Mise en oeuvre* in class. Tuesday night, you can continue the Workbook. Listen carefully to the tape and do the exercises.

On Wednesday, I'll show you passages from the movie, and we'll start preparing to read and write the words.

I'll assign you a role to play for Thursday that you can practice speaking Wednesday night.

On Thursday, we act out the movie in small groups in front of the class. You can see how everything fits together Thursday night, and we have a small quiz on Friday. Leave your Workbook with me. There is no homework on the weekend.

PROFESSOR FOX'S SCORE-CARD

	In Class	At Home
Monday	Watch the Movie.	Listen to tape "workup"
Tuesday	Get involved in the Movie.	Listen to the rest of the tape
Wednesday	I'll help you the Workbook	Prepare Sketch.
Thursday	Perform Sketch.	Workbook and Text drill.
Friday	Summary Quiz in class Hand in Homework.	

NO HOMEWORK ON THE WEEKEND

GRADES
30% Participation in Class
30% Attendance
20% Friday Quizzes
20% Homework
Grade yourself, too...keep score, and hand in your score-card with the Workbook on Friday!

FINALLY

If you're having problems understanding me or the movie, don't worry. You're not meant to undersand everything, or even most of what you see and hear.

So observe, listen, and get involved. Try to figure out what's going on. You'll soon find out that you can guess correctly most of the time...and say a few things in French yourself.

My class is relaxed and informal. There's no reason to feel embarrassed. You have to try to speak, and don't forget that you learn by making mistakes. So loosen up!

If you have questions in English -- write them down, and come see me after class. Don't introduce English here, because in this class, everybody speaks French! BON COURAGE!

French in Action in Australia

Melbourne - *French in Action* , currently screening on the national ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) TV network, is broadcast throughout Australia as part of the pilot "TV Open Learning" Project. The Australian government is funding the project to provide wider access to higher education, particularly in rural and remote areas ("the outback"). The *French in Action* course is being offered throughout the country by the University of New England, located in Armidale, New South Wales.

The program was launched here in early March by the Australian Minister for Higher Education along with other TV Open Learning courses. *French in Action* has by far been the most popular Open Learning course, with about 2,000 people enrolled. Enrollment is at least five times higher than had been expected. The program has even provided television rating points and vied heavily with the popular breakfast show,"Good Morning Australia."

Yale University Press to publish tests for *French in Action*

New Haven- Yale University Press is pleased to announce the November publication of *French in Action* Test Banks. Written by Béatrice Abetti, Elizabeth Anglin, Elizabeth Berwanger, and Carolyn Demaray, the tests represent a range of difficulty and appropriateness for various learning situations, from secondary schools through four-year colleges. There are four tests for each lesson, and they are designed to allow the instructor maximum flexibility in adapting to the needs of individual classes.

The Test Banks package consists of a complete set of teacher's scripts for each test, with guidelines for administering the tests and answer keys, or suggestions for alternate responses, where appropriate, and a complete set of students' tests, suitable for duplication.

The price of the package is $100 and includes permission to duplicate the students' test for classroom use.

FiA Test Banks ordering information :
Address your order on official school purchase order or school letterhead to:

Yale University Press
92A Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520
Attn: Special Projects
Sorry, no phone orders.

FiA4 1 2 3

Become an FiA pioneer. Join the network of users. Keep in touch with your colleagues.
Simply fill out this subscription form and send it to:
The French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

Name_____ Institution_____ Department_____

Address_____

City _____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone_____ Fax_____

*Do you use **French in Action** as: _____ a core course? _____ a supplement ? _____ a telecourse?*

*Check here if you would like to receive more information on the **French in Action** Test Banks: _____*

Bulletin Board

A la recherche du numéro 18

On a recent trip to France, a group of my students took an hour off to hunt down the infamous 18, rue de Vaugirard, hoping *sans doute* to catch Mireille *qui sortait de chez elle*...or at least to have their pictures taken in front of this apartment with such a beautiful view (except for the Tour Montparnasse — quelle horreur!) of the Jardins du Luxembourg.

Please make note for future tourists that this new Mecca (which proved more of a draw than Jim Morrison's grave), is, however *utile pour apprendre le français*, as fictitious as the rest of the story!

Dr. Casey Black
Northern State University
Aberdeen, SD

Yes, indeed number 18, rue de Vaugirard is fictitious; for the very reason illustrated in Professor Black's letter. Before FiA was filmed, we at Yale and at a few other institutions were teaching with a prototype course. So many of our students would rush to the real building on rue de Vaugirard and ring the bell, hoping that Mireille would open the door, that we were obliged to move Mireille and her family twice.

When we made preparations to film French in Action, we anticipated the problem would be, of course, worse after the program was seen by tens of thousands of students and millions of home viewers. So, we had to find a number on rue de Vaugirard that would not pose a problem. I selected number 18 precisely because it does not exist. (If it did, it would be the back of the Odéon Theatre.) This solution created only a minor difficulty: whenever we wanted to shoot in front of Mireille's house, the crew had to bring a ladder to take down the actual number, replace it with number 18, and put back the right number when we were through.

PJC

We have been told many times that switching to French in Action has boosted enrollments. We received a letter from Professor Weinstock at Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY. who says: "Grâce à votre *French in Action* vous avez ressuscité notre département de français. Avant *French in Action*, 28 étudiants dans le cours de français; après *French in Action*, 125 étudiants. Les nombres s'améliorent de semestre en semestre. "

Qui dit mieux?

Congratulations to Professor Weinstock and the French department at Rockland for a job well done!

Des étudiants nous écrivent:

Cher M. Capretz,

Je ne peux pas vous dire comment votre cours, *French in Action* , m'aide à comprendre et à étudier le français . . . avant cette année, la langue ne me plaisait pas beaucoup, probablement parce que les livres que nous utilisions étaient ennuyeux. Ils n'avaient guère d' humour, pas de personnages intéressants. J'admire votre énergie. Je regrette de ne pas avoir commencé à étudier le français avec *French in Action*. A propos, mon frère Fred est allé à Yale, mais c'est dommage qu'il n'ait pas étudié le français quand il était à l'université — vous auriez été son professeur!

Erik Campano

Notez Bien:

Effective 10/1/92, the price for the FiA audiocasssettes is $60.00 per part.

MEC

French in Action
NEWSLETTER
Yale University Press
92A Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520

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French in Action

NEWSLETTER

Number 5 | Creating a Network of **French in Action** Users | Fall 1993

New Zealand's *Educational TV*

Jackie-Ann Ross explains why they chose FiA

In 1992, the Auckland Institute of Technology decided to run French in Action as part of Educational Television (ETV), a telecourse program sponsored by the university in conjunction with Television New Zealand (TVNZ). The first broadcast was made in April 1993. French and psychology are the first two subjects being offered and so far, the program seems to be generating a lot of interest. As of April, ETV had received about 2,000 inquiries, over half of them for French in Action.

Jackie-Ann Ross is teaching the French in Action telecourse at Auckland, in which 150 students are currently enrolled. The following is an abstract of a presentation about French in Action she recently did at the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers' Conference:

1. The story behind the scenes

Pierre Capretz started teaching in 1949 and was dissatisfied with the methods at his disposal right from the start. "I soon became convinced a radically different approach could and should be found," he said. "I was privileged to participate actively, in the sixties, in the 'audio-lingual' revolution in this country but felt all that time that bringing authentic spoken language to the students was not enough, and that we had to show them the speakers speaking the language, the circumstances in which it is spoken, and the cultural reality it refers to."[1] To this end

"What attracts students to the study of a foreign language is ...the opening up of a new world by the foreign language..."

Capretz used films or excerpts from films. But the problem every teacher faces with native language documents of this kind is the level of language used. The teacher has no control over the input, and always ends up having to explain far more vocabulary than is desirable. That is why Capretz decided to create his own film, in which he could control the vocabulary and grammatical and situational input. The French in Action program was published in 1987 and was incredibly successful. In 1989, the whole series was broadcast three times in a row. By the Spring of 1990, an estimated 8.5 million people had watched the program. Though the success was rapid, the gestation and elaboration of the program was slow. The product we now have is the outcome of nearly thirty years' work. Six prototypes were developed and tested in a dozen or so American institutions over twenty years. An additional three years were taken in the hunt for funding and in contract negotiations. Another three and a half years then were needed to finalize the project: scripts had to be written, situations filmed and edited, support materials written and produced. In all, over three hundred people worked on this project either in the States or in France.[2]

2. The methodology

So what makes French in Action so different from other methods? Well, let's look at some of the general notions upon which the course is based.

1. Learning is a function of motivation;
2. A printed text in a foreign language (by itself and in itself) is not particularly motivating, especially for beginners;
3. The simplified language proposed by most textbooks turns students off;
4. Students are equally turned off by unnatural language that does not carry actual information;
5. Learning the transformational rules that enable one to decode a foreign language into one's own may be an exciting intellectual exercise but this kind of activity is not particularly fascinating for students who have not yet opted for careers as cryptologists;
6. What attracts students to the study of a foreign language is not its appear-

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NEWS

We welcome any and all news of interest to the community of French in Action users. Please send newsworthy items that you'd like to share to the French in Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511

Capretz receives honorary degree from Middlebury College

Middlebury,VT – In August, Middlebury College granted an honorary Doctorate of Letters to **Pierre Capretz** in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to and leadership in the advancement of the teaching of French. Professor Capretz received this citation (see right) from the President of Middlebury College. Congratulations to Professor Capretz on this well-deserved honor!

Pierre Capretz, Doctor of Letters

Pierre Capretz: teacher, cineast, father of Robert and Mireille, educator from the future.

You have shown your colleagues that future in creating the first truly video-based method for teaching a language. You have shown us as well the rich results of pedagogy developed over the longue durée, and have made us keenly aware of the benefits — indeed the necessity — of humor in language learning. You have provoked us into remembering that contact with another culture does not always comfort one's own cultural assumptions and practices. In short, you have shown us that in learning a foreign language one can and must remain a thinking adult. At Middlebury we have never doubted that premise, and in honoring you tonight we celebrate our own strongly held beliefs and traditions.

It is therefore my privilege, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Middlebury College, to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, *with all the rights, honors, privileges, and responsibilities here and everywhere appertaining to this degree.*

August 13, 1993
Office of the President
Middlebury College

Meister and Juhel wed

Coral Springs, FL – On December 27, 1992, **Barbara Meister** of New York City's Collegiate School and **Jean-Marc Juhel** of Trinity School, also in New York, were wed at the home of the bride's sister. The two veteran FiA teachers were introduced in June 1992 when the director of Columbia University's Klingenstein Center invited them to co-present a workshop on video pedagogy. A long-distance romance ensued (Jean-Marc was teaching in Colorado until recently). *Comme c'est curieux, comme c'est bizarre, et quelle coincidence!!*

French in Action
NEWSLETTER
Number 5
Contributors: Jackie-Ann Ross, Clifton Garrett
Editor for Yale University Press: Mary E. Coleman

The French in Action Newsletter is published by the French in Action Project in association with Yale University Press and the Annenberg/CPB Project. Subcriptions are free and can be obtained by completing the form on page 7 and returning it to:

French in Action Newsletter
111 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

Manning retires

Boulder, CO – **Jeanne Manning** has retired from her position at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria. Jeanne helped create a very successful telecourse program at the college, where they used technology to teach distant learners. Jeanne now lives in Boulder and is still very active with French in Action.

Epp receives award for excellence in teaching

Lincoln, NE – **Anthony Epp** of Nebraska Wesleyan University has received the Burlington Northern Award for Excellence in Teaching. Our congratulations to Mr. Epp! (Be sure to see Mr. Epp's letter in the "Bulletin Board" section.)

continued on page 5

New Zealand

continued from page 1

ance as an abstruse code — saying the very same things that are said more simply in their mother tongue — but rather, the opening up of a new world by the foreign language;
7. Understanding is a prerequisite to speaking;
8. Students, at any point, can understand much more than they can say;
9. There can be no understanding of language without a knowledge of the context in which the language occurs;
10. Language cannot be invented by the learners; it can be imitated and adapted to individual use through recombination of observed segments.[3]

The questions that were raised were: How, then, do we keep the students motivated and interested? How should we introduce new language? How can we talk to our students without babying them? How can we revise vocabulary and grammatical structures without boring them? The format that answered these questions was the soap. Soaps have the ability of hooking people. There is satisfaction in seeing the same people week in, week out, in following their adventures. Though the focus in FiA is on two young people, Mireille and Robert, Mireille's family is always in the background and introduces people of all ages. This makes the story more "realistic" and interesting.

"...How, then, do we keep the students motivated and interested? How should we introduce new language?... The format that answered these questions was the soap."

The soap format with which TV viewers are familiar enables the teacher to stop the video at critical moments. It creates suspense between episodes and thus maintains the students' interest. Soaps also allow the presentation of a whole series of culturally relevant vignette situations in which natural French can be spoken and understood. They are ideal for the introduction and systematic repetition and revision of new vocabulary and grammatical structures. The FiA soap parodies conventional soaps thus creating the requisite emotional distance between the viewers and heroes that frees students in their reinvention exercises.

This medium presents students with an interesting and large corpus of words. Because students can understand more at any one time than they can say, the medium allows the teacher to talk to the students, using complex structures which the students can understand

because they are contextualized, and to which they can respond using simple language. The visual approach is therefore a great help in excluding English from the learning process. Indeed, French is not a coded version of English. In putting new words in concrete situations, students learn to do without English. They are trained to guess at meanings from the context. This stresses a more active role in the learning process for the student.

What the students experience with this course is controlled and guided sequential immersion. "For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver. The innovation of FiA is to take immersion one step further, rendering authentic speech comprehensible by breaking it down into structured components. in other words, to offer immersion coupled with a systematic way of coping with it. Bit by bit, using the arsenal of video techniques at his

continued on page 7

Calendar

October 15, 1993
Oklahoma Foreign Language Association, Tulsa, OK

October 21 - 23, 1993
Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Peoria, IL

October 27, 1993
*Workshop for French in Action Teachers**
with Barbara and Jean-Marc Juhel
New Trier High School, Winnetka, IL

October 28 - 30, 1993
Foreign Language Association of North Carolina , Greensboro, NC

October 29-30, 1993
Massachusetts Foreign Language Association, Sturbridge, MA

November 19-22, 1993
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
San Antonio, TX
Yale University Press booth

Monday November 22, 1993
3-5 p.m.
*French in Action workshop**
with Alan Astro of Trinity University, San Antonio

December 28-30, 1993
Modern Language Association
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Yale University Press booth

*Advance registration is required. For more information, please contact Yale University Press at (203) 432-0912.

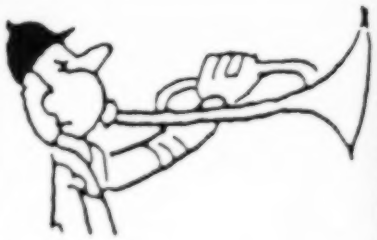


Tableau d'Honneur

The following work of art was composed and recited by a chorus of students at Darien High School in Darien, Connecticut, on the occasion of Professor Capretz's visit:

Bonjour, Monsieur Capretz et comment allez-vous?
Nous voulons vous souhaiter la bienvenue!
Nous sommes étudiants en dernière année
fiers d'avoir fait cinq ans de français.

En y réfléchissant, nous sommes contents de vous dire
qu'apprendre le français était un plaisir.

Quand nous partirons pour l'université
Nous n'oublierons jamais Robert et Mireille.

Et nous nous souviendrons toujours du professeur
Qui nous a souvent mis de bonne humeur

Avec vos histoires si drôles, si utiles, si rares
Et ce monsieur en noir: bizarre! bizarre!

Quand nous ferons des voyages, n'importe où
Vos leçons de French in Action seront toujours avec nous.

Nous connaissons Paris, les Français, et la France,
Grâce à notre prof de français par excellence.

Votre visite aujourd'hui nous donne de la joie
Merci, Monsieur Capretz, merci mille fois!

This *réinvention de l'histoire* was completed by Cristina and José Salinas, a husband-and-wife team at Northern Virginia Community College whose child was born during the Spring '93 semester. Little Daniel was compliant with his parents' wish that he be born during Spring Break , so that neither parent would miss a class of French in Action. He inspired the following (after leçon 10):

José: Ça fait quatre heures qu'il pleure! C'est ton tour!!

Cristina: Mon tour! Il est trois heures du matin.

José: Tu es sourde ou quoi? Je dis que c'est ton tour.

Cristina: Je ne suis pas sourde. Ce n'est pas de jeu....Alors, va chercher du lait.

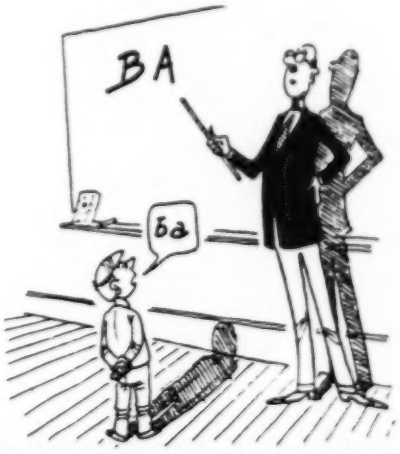
José: Je ne suis pas la bonne.... (De la cuisine) Je ne trouve pas de lait. Où est-ce qu'il est?

Cristina: Ce que tu peux être bête! Dans le réfrigérateur, évidemment!

José: Idiote! Je ne vais pas lui donner de lait froid!

Cristina: Oh là là! Tu as sale caractère à trois heures du matin. (A Daniel) Allez, Daniel, ne pleure plus. Je vais te donner du lait, mon petit garçon.

José: Il est très beau. Je l'adore.



News

continued from page 2

Yale University Press to release new edition of French in Action

New Haven, CT - Yale University Press is proud to announce the forthcoming publication of the second edition of the French in Action print and audio materials. Copies of the materials will be available for review next Spring. The new edition will make FiA's innovative methodology even more accessible and flexible. New features include more workbook exercises, all-new audiocassettes, and new sections for reading and writing exercises. **To receive review materials next Spring, complete and return the coupon on page 7 or contact Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520, Attn: French in Action.**

New Test Banks well received by French in Action community

The recently released testing program continues to grow in popularity among French in Action teachers. The **Test Banks** by Béatrice Abetti, Elizabeth Anglin, Elizabeth Berwanger, and Carolyn Demaray are a complete set of tests for lessons 2 through 52, covering the entire sequence of instruction. There are four different tests for each lesson. The tests represent a range of difficulty and appropriateness for various learning situations, from secondary schools to four-year colleges. They are designed to allow the instructor maximum flexibility in adapting to the needs of individual classes.
The test bank package consists of a teacher's manual that includes complete scripts for each test, with guidelines for administering the tests and answer keys, or suggestions for alternate responses, where appropriate, and a complete set of students' tests, suitable for duplication. The purchase price of $100 includes permission to duplicate the students' test for classroom use.

If you'd like to receive a sample chapter from the Test Banks for review, please complete and return the coupon on page 7 or contact Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520 Attn: French in Action

Tuyaux

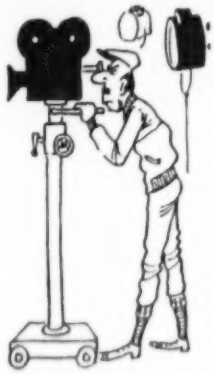
Do you have any helpful hints you'd like to share with your colleagues? We'd love to hear about them! Please submit your original tuyaux *to the French in Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.*

This *tuyau* was provided by Clifton Garrett of Bakersfield College in Bakerfield, CA.

For instructors who have access to a video camera or mini-cam, here's a suggestion to "prime the pump" for student responses to the *Mots en liberté* section in each FiA lesson. These sections pose questions which provoke responses that activate recently learned structures and vocabulary.

Compile a list of these questions and, when travelling in a Francophone country, carry them along with your mini-cam. When you make the acquaintance of French speakers, let them know that you are working on a little project to enliven your instruction of the language by videotaping people responding to the questions. It doesn't take long; a ten- to fifteen-minute session of taping can encompass many questions. Then, after editing, the results when played back to a class provide authenticity to an exercise that may sometimes seem too unreal and academic for some students.

Almost without exception, my subjects responded warmly and with animation. To one little old lady whom I met at a senior citizens' center in a Provençal village, I posed a question from Lesson 11: "Qu'est qu'on peut faire quand il fait beau, en été?" She answered with a twinkle in her eye and without the slightest hestitation: "On peut faire du nudisme!"



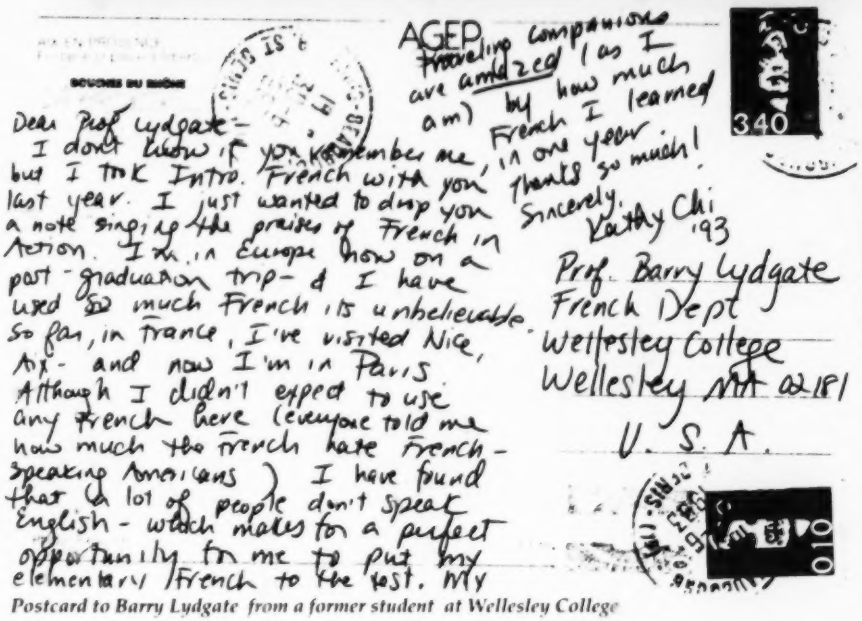
Australia now broadcasting Part II of FiA

Melbourne – In our Fall 1992 newsletter, we reported that, as part of the government-funded "TV Open Learning Project" to promote wider access to higher education in remote parts of the country, **ABC** (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) began broadcasting Part I of French in Action in April 1992. The series has been so popular that it has provided stiff competition for the popular breakfast show, Good Morning Australia. Due to its enormous success, ABC is now continuing with the second part of the program.

French in Action in Taiwan

Taipei, Taiwan – French in Action is now available in the Far East through Central Book Publishing Company in Taipei.

Bulletin Board


AGEP
Traveling companions are amazed I as I am by how much French I learned in one year.
Thanks so much!
Sincerely,
Kathy Chi '93
Prof. Barry Lydgate
French Dept
Wellesley College
Wellesley MA 02181
U.S.A.
Dear Prof Lydgate -
I don't know if you remember me, but I took Intro. French with you last year. I just wanted to drop you a note singing the praises of French in Action. I'm in Europe now on a post-graduation trip - & I have used so much French it's unbelievable. So far, in France, I've visited Nice, Aix - and now I'm in Paris. Although I didn't expect to use any French here (everyone told me how much the French hate French-speaking Americans) I have found that a lot of people don't speak English - which makes for a perfect opportunity for me to put my elementary French to the test. My

Postcard to Barry Lydgate from a former student at Wellesley College

Dear Professor Capretz:

I attended a French in Action workshop at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville this spring and it has completely revitalized my use of the FiA program. I learned so much from the UTK workshop and feel much more confident about my use of the materials. I am in my 20th year of teaching French and cannot imagine ever going back to a non-video program. Thank you for your brillantly and creatively crafted program. You have revolutionized language teaching and learning as far as I'm concerned.

One last remark: I was at a summer institute for French teachers 11 years ago when you and Professor Lydgate made a presentation about your project. I knew then that I wanted to change over to your materials, but it took me eight more years before I got the courage to do so.

Thank you again, Professor Capretz. As I'm sure you've heard before, one of my students said last week: "I've learned more in three weeks than I learned in the two years I took French in high school."

Anne F. Curtis
Chattanooga State Technical
Community College
Chattanooga, TN

Interested in meeting other FiA teachers in your area?

Several teachers have expressed interest in contacting others in their area who also teach with French in Action. If you'd like to form a group or just get in touch, please let us know by calling Yale University Press at (203) 432-0912.

Position wanted

Teacher with many years' experience with French in Action at Yale, Mount Holyoke, and Middlebury is relocating to Chicago and seeks French teaching position in the area. Please address possible leads to FiA Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Dear French in Action Newsletter:

Very soon after I started using French in Action in Beginning French at Nebraska Wesleyan University, I realized that it was enabling me to teach French the way I had become convinced that it was best taught. Let me explain. In most texts, one has exercises which one assigns and then must check in class. FiA bypasses that step, putting all the responsibility for checking on the students. Thus, in class I am able to spend an entire hour every day bombarding students with French for which they are prepared, yet which they do not see. In addition, I find a kind of interest from students which other texts fail to elicit. Students want to know what happens next. They get aggravated with Robert. Although theoretically turned off by Jean-Pierre, they openly admit that he fascinates them. After one year, I think the students have a wonderful feel for the language. But in addition, they know what France looks like. In terms of the *Quartier Latin*, they know it all except for the smells.

Anthony Epp
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Lincoln, NE

New Zealand

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disposal, and a wealth of camouflaged occasions for repetition, Capretz provides the necessary life preserver."[4]

3. The grammar question

Some people have criticized FiA for the lack of grammar and grammatical exercises it contains. All I can say is that they cannot have looked at it properly. "It is in the pedagogical section of the video that the student first encounters the grammar of each chapter. There is ... a formal grammar presentation in most of the video lessons.... Essential grammar distinctions are often enacted on the screen while the verbal equivalents are shown as subtitles. For example, images rapidly alternate between *'elle promène Fido'* and *'elle se promène.'*"[5]

The tape and workbook exercises ensure that students can test their understanding and grasp of this new form. 'New' in this method really means that this is being focused on for the first time. Capretz's way of familiarizing students with a new grammatical structure is to introduce it but not to focus on it until the students have heard it a few times. When he does focus on it, the students feel they already know it.

A brief study has been made of grammatical ability and general results achieved by two groups of students, one using a traditional textbook and the other French in Action. The former is a more traditional grammar-in-context course and grammar takes a central place in each chapter. In FiA, grammar is introduced in an original but totally logical way. Structures are brought to the students' notice when they need them and are constantly revised and repeated. They are also introduced in such a way as to give maximum oral flexibility. For example, ***aller + infinitif*** is introduced in lesson one. The students do not know how to conjugate any verb other than *aller*, yet they can already express a lot. These two groups of students both had had three terms of the traditional text. They were tested at the beginning and at the end of the experiment, which lasted one semester. They were taught by the same teacher. Although more data would be needed to verify the results of this experiment, the outcome of the tests showed that the French in Action group did significantly better in the grammar scores, although otherwise they only did marginally better than their counterparts using the traditional book."

4. The level

The Capretz method was originally devised for use at the university level, but it is being used successfully in high schools throughout the US. It is interesting to note that students having completed two years of FiA at school "can safely be placed in advanced courses"[7] at university. This is due in part to the vocabulary students are taught. If the context calls for what other programs would term advanced vocabulary, Capretz introduces it and the students accept it without realizing its difficulty because it is "relevant to the story and highly practical."[8]

Added to their knowledge of vocabulary is the insight into French culture they obtain often subconsciously from watching the videos. This helps them tremendously and gives them a great advantage over other students when it comes to dealing with French literary works.

5. How to use FiA in class

"The recommended procedure is for the teachers to show the video — a brief segment at a time — playing back utterances several times if necessary, to make sure that the students perceive the sounds spoken and then gain a global understanding of what is said. Since the language used in the video is natural and has not been simplified, students are, of course, not expected to understand everything at first; instead

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they get a general notion of what is going on. Comprehension will be gradually refined as the spoken text is manipulated further."[7]

Once they watch the video, students do a text work up using the audio tape. This covers the vocabulary from the video and requires students to repeat words, then give brief answers before moving on to longer ones. It covers pronunciation and intonation as well as comprehension.

The students then continue to listen to the audio tape and complete the exercises in the workbook. These cover a whole range of activities: observation, grammar rules, tonic stress pronunciation, activation exercises right through to self-tests and reinvention exercises of the story line.

The last step is the textbook itself, in which they read the text from the video. The words the students must focus on are illustrated to enhance understanding and retention. At the end of the text is a series of questions that students should now be able to answer without difficulty.

Last of all is a document relevant to the subject matter of the lesson: a short poem, a cartoon, an extract from a song, a play.

Editor's note: Ms. Ross's original piece continues with a sample lesson plan from an earlier issue of the French in Action *Newsletter (No. 1). If you would like to receive this or any other back issue of the Newsletter, please address requests to Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520 Attn: French in Action.*

NOTES

[1] Pierre J. Capretz: Unpublished Private Communication to J-A Ross, April 15, 1993

[2] From Pierre J. Capretz: "French in Action sur PBS et sur Cassettes," p. 5

[3] "A Video-Based System for the Teaching of French Language and Culture" Journal of Educational Techniques and Technologies, Vol. 22, no. 2/3, (1989), p. 3

[4] "French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs" by Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadler-Chester, French in Action Newsletter 3, (1992), pp. 2-3

[5] "French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs" by Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadler-Chester, French in Action Newsletter 3, (1992), p. 5

[6] From Raylene Ramsey, "French in Action and the Grammar Question" The French Review, Vol. 65 no. 2, (1991), pp. 255-266

[7] Antoinette Shewmake, The French Review, Vol. 3, no. 6, 1990, p. 1093

[8] Francoise Watts, "Two Years Later, An Evaluation of French in Action," Foreign Language Association of Virginia Bulletin, Vol. 45, no. 1, (1989)

[9] "A Video-Based System for the Teaching of French Language and Culture" Journal of Educational Techniques and Technologies, Vol. 22, no. 2/3, (1989), p. 4

[10] "Watkins' Built in Review System for French in Action", in: French in Action Newsletter, Vol. 1, no. 1, (1991), p. 6

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